

Anne Tyler on a Thriving City Neighborhood

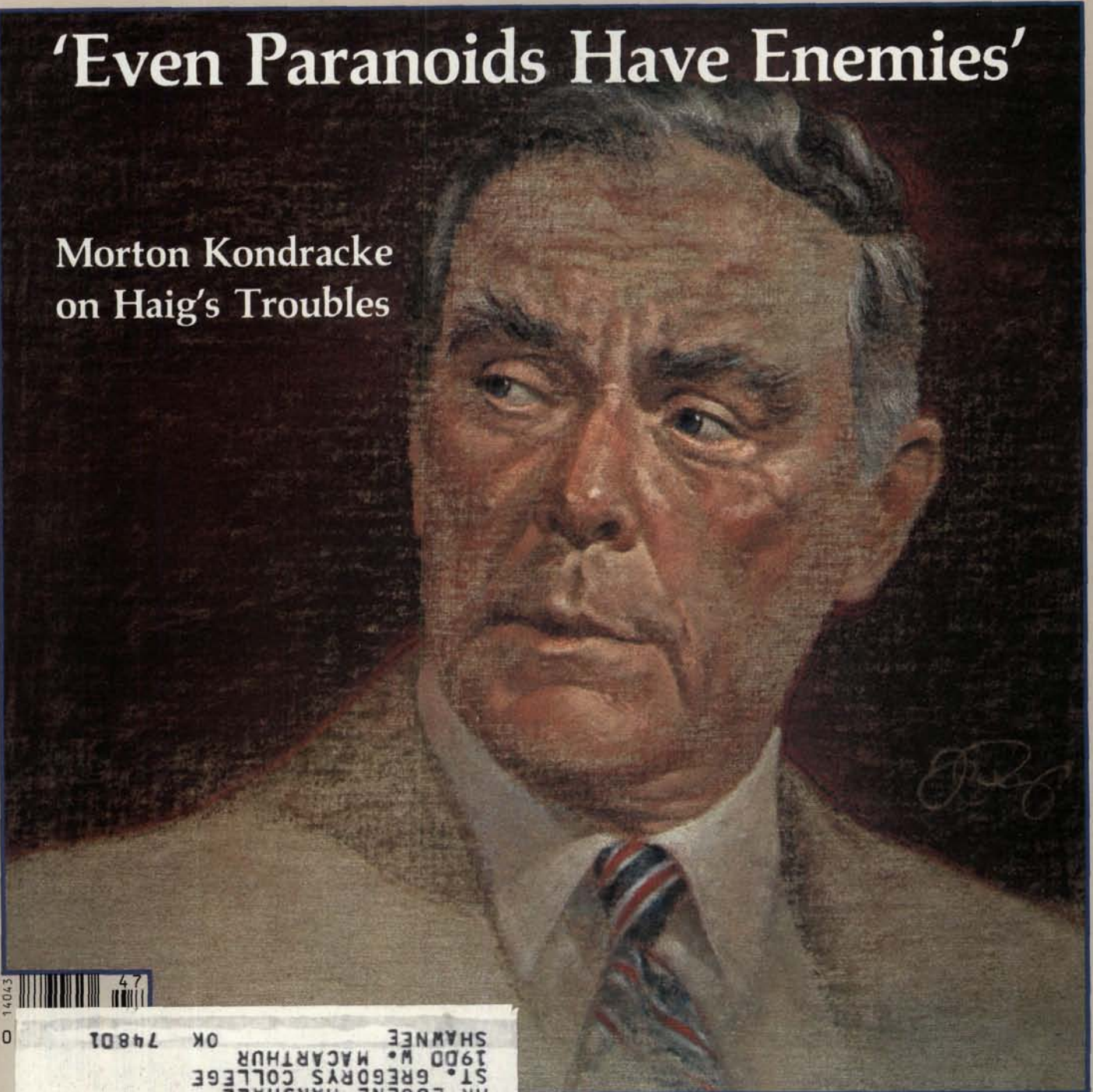
The Watery Neo-Liberalism of Senator Tsongas, by Robert M. Kaus

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FROM WASHINGTON

This column is written by Peter Osnos, national editor of the Washington Post. Richard Strout, the regular author of TRB, is on vacation.

RINGMASTER RON

Washington is increasingly coming to resemble a three-ring circus. Ronald Reagan is the ringmaster, of course, and everyone else is playing the parts of assorted tame seals, recalcitrant lions, and acrobats. Spectators have the usual dizzying problem of trying to focus on everything at once.

Two of the arenas should seem reasonably clear. In the center ring is the economic trapeze act where slowdowns in social spending are theoretically going to balance with tax cuts and big boosts in defense costs. The safety net is supposed to keep anyone from getting seriously hurt. On the far end are the Russian bears, brandishing their big paws and making aggressive gestures toward smaller folk. Our ringmaster proposes to bring the grizzlies under control through a variety of artful swipes, and by filling their tummies with grain.

The third ring is actually the hardest to see because it involves the disappearing act—making things smaller (or weaker) or doing them in secret. In this arena, Ronald Reagan is reversing two decades of increasing federal intervention and accountability—policies designed to protect the rights of individuals against abuses by their government and by big business. With his manner of inbred casualness, he is upending trends that were spurred by the cataclysmic social and political tensions of the civil rights campaigns, Vietnam, and Watergate.

The liberal Administrations of Kennedy, Johnson, and Carter were predictably committed to advancing the

rights of minorities through legislation and, later, affirmative action. That was their mandate, a natural legacy of democratic populism. Federal registrars deployed as long ago as the mid-1960s to assure compliance with the Voting Rights Act were seen as a benevolent force to redress wrongs that would not be eliminated on their own.

Yet even in the conservative years of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, the momentum for federal protections was enhanced to include the accountability laws—the broadened Freedom of Information Act and anti-pollution statutes. It was Nixon in 1970 who sponsored the legislation that created the Environmental Protection Agency, now under a debilitating Reagan review.

On some of the issues Mr. Reagan has targeted for retrogression, public attitudes have been pretty clearly demonstrated. Busing to achieve racial balance is unpopular, for instance. But there are other matters where less is known about popular sentiment: the post-Watergate requirements for ethics in government, the declassification of government secrets, the social activism of federal courts. Mr. Reagan obviously

thinks the reform spirit has gone too far and wants to roll it back.

In a speech at times almost menacingly advocating restraint by judges in the implementation of social policies, Attorney General William French Smith asserted: "We believe that the groundswell of conservatism evidenced by the 1980 election makes this an especially appropriate time to urge upon the courts more principled bases that would diminish judicial activism." And then he observed disapprovingly that courts have restructured school systems, and taken control of prisons and public housing projects.

The message is that such actions should cease at the same time that the federal government is voluntarily reducing its own involvement in those areas. The other day, after months of deliberation, Mr. Reagan endorsed an extension of the Voting Rights Act, but made it plain that he favored an amendment that would obligate minorities to show that they are victims of an intention to discriminate—which supporters of the act say would make it vastly harder to enforce.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

FOUNDED 1914

ISSUE 3,489

WASHINGTON, D.C.

November 25, 1981

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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Volume 185, Number 21, Issue 3,489, November 25, 1981. Published weekly (except the weeks of January 3, July 11, August 8, and August 29) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. Advertising: (202) 331-9787. Leadership Network advertising: (212) 682-4500. Single copy, \$1.50; yearly subscriptions, \$32; foreign, \$39; students, \$18. © 1981 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide and Media Review Digest. Available on microfilm from University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulation. Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome, but cannot be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. **Subscribers:** Please send all remittances, changes of address, and inquiries about subscriptions and undelivered copies to **Subscription Service Department, The New Republic, P.O. Box 955, Farmingdale, NY 11737.**

CORRESPONDENCE

CARVER'S LEGACY

To the editors:

While I am pleased by the generous comments about my scholarship in David Herbert Donald's review of *George Washington Carver: Scientist and Symbol* (TNR, October 28), I am a little disturbed by the nature of his summary. The focus of Donald's review gives the impression that my evaluation of Carver and his legacy is far more negative than I intended. As long as mankind attempts to allocate fairly and to use wisely the world's resources, much of what Carver believed and did will be relevant, even if these ideas are not what made him famous. I urge your readers to examine the book before they conclude that Carver "is no longer a part of our usable past."

Linda O. McMurry
North Carolina State University
Raleigh, North Carolina

BIG APPLE POLITICS

To the editors:

It is hard to tell where Mayor Ed Koch's press releases end and THE NEW REPUBLIC's editorial begins ("The Koch Consensus," October 14). The editorial reiterates to the last vibration the clumsy City Hall explanation about what happened in New York's recent primary election. The Koch campaign first told reporters that Koch would get 80 percent of the vote on both Democratic and Republican lines. In the last month that prediction was reduced to 70 percent and a majority of the minority vote. In fact, Koch's vote turned out to be below 60 percent, and he was rejected by blacks and Hispanics by a 71-29 margin. Koch spent \$1,250,000 as against his opponents' \$150,000. The turnout was the lowest for a contested primary in New York's modern history. There are 2,444,000 registered voters in New York City; a little more than 400,000 voted for Ed Koch. To call these results a "consensus" drains the word of any serious meaning.

Even worse, THE NEW REPUBLIC's explanation of the black and Hispanic vote is surely a slur on minority communities. They knew exactly what they were doing. Just before the primary election Koch signed a redistricting bill prepared

by the City Council and his legal staff. That plan was supposed to account for the demographic changes that took place between the 1970 and 1980 censuses. The data showed that the city's minority population had doubled, approaching one-half. The Koch administration's answer to these facts was to add two *white* seats to the City Council. The redistricting was so blatantly discriminatory that a unanimous Appellate Court panel and a unanimous United States Supreme Court rejected it and postponed the councilman's primary until the city could learn how to redraw a map.

The editorial tries to indicate that Koch's defeat in minority areas resulted from the opposition of black leaders who are mischievously characterized as "parasitic," "corrupt," and "covetous of polemical victories." The fact is that the bulk of minority-elected officials supported Koch. Representatives Shirley Chisholm and Robert Garcia were part of a quarter-million dollar media blitz to replace the divot before the general election.

Richard Wade
CUNY
New York, New York

The editors reply:

Since Richard Wade wrote his confident letter about minority hostility to Ed Koch, the Mayor of New York has won reelection in a landslide. In the process, he also won approximately two-thirds of the black and Hispanic votes. That, surely, is a consensus, even if it is deeply disappointing to Professor Wade. In alluding to press releases, by the way, he was hardly being candid: Wade was a functionary in the campaign of Mary Codd, who won barely three percent of the vote.

GREEKS AND THE AWACS

To the editors:

Certainly the sale of Awacs to Saudi Arabia is wrong, principally because it would place a weapon with offensive capability in hands that traditionally have been raised against our friend and ally, Israel ("Greeks and Jews," TNR, October 28). Certainly American Jews and non-Jews have a responsibility and a right to oppose the sale, and the Rea-

gan Administration deserves criticism and careful scrutiny for its attempts to question the loyalty of Americans who disagree with its position and to revive old prejudices. But what is TNR up to? The "events in Cyprus" that led to a U.S. embargo on the supply of arms to Turkey were an invasion of a sovereign nation by a U.S. ally using modern American weapons against Greek-Cypriots poorly armed with weapons of World War I vintage.

Arthur J. Markos
Cranston, Rhode Island

STATISTICAL SOPHISTRY

To the editors:

By advocating the abandonment of the drive for a balanced federal budget in 1984 ("Out on a Limb," TNR, October 14), you are not only cutting off liberalism and its main political representative, the Democratic Party, from the very constituency upon which its survival depends; you are also imposing an impossible burden on the same poor people you wish to represent and defend.

Instead of indulging in statistical sophistry about deficits as a percentage of GNP, we must recognize that stopping the trend of deficit spending will in the long run provide more, not less, federal funds for social programs. And we don't have to resort to any theories of supply-side economics or a hypothetical increase in federal revenue that will come from economic recovery in the private sector.

The sad fact is that as the accumulated federal deficit crosses the trillion-dollar mark, over one hundred billion dollars are spent each year to pay the interest on the national debt. Consider how much better that money could be spent for the American people if we succeed not only in balancing the federal budget but also in reducing the total liability represented by that trillion-dollar debt.

Now is no time to indulge in short-sighted political passion. A permanent reversal of the debilitating spiral of the federal deficit will liberate far more federal dollars for useful and necessary social programs than any short-term sabotage of the economic recovery program could hope to provide.

Charles H. Eisengrein Jr.
San Francisco, California



THE NEW REPUBLIC

NOVEMBER 25, 1981

HUMAN RIGHTS REVISITED

The issue of what role human rights ought to play in the foreign policy of the United States is one that has bedeviled the Reagan Administration from the beginning. President Reagan took office determined to reverse the human rights policy of his predecessor, which he regarded as sissy stuff: naive, unrealistic, and more hurtful to friends than to adversaries. After toying with the idea of abolishing the government's human rights machinery altogether, Mr. Reagan did the next best—or next worst—thing: as his nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, he chose a man who had repeatedly expressed the view that human rights standards and the formulation of foreign policy ought to have nothing to do with each other. The nomination of Ernest W. Lefever turned out to be the new Administration's first sizable political embarrassment. It had to be withdrawn in the face of strong public and senatorial resistance—resistance that owed less to Mr. Lefever's idiosyncratic views than to widespread suspicions that the Administration saw human rights solely as a minor weapon in its anti-Soviet campaign, and that it proposed to give uncritical support to tyrannies of the right.

Both before and after the Lefever debacle, the Administration has seemed to go out of its way to confirm such suspicions. We are thinking, among other things, of Vice President Bush's fatuous tribute to the "wonderful democracy" of the Philippines; the rapprochement with South Africa; the vote to seat the Khmer Rouge delegation in the United Nations; the attempt to force the analytic distinction between totalitarianism and authoritarianism to conform to the strategic distinction between pro-Soviet and anti-Soviet; the abandonment of efforts to use the withholding of loans and military aid to influence Latin American dictatorships like Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay. While Mr. Reagan's representatives at the U.N. have vigorously renewed the ideological battle against the Soviet Union their moral credit

has been drained away by an overall approach that systematically subordinates human rights to a crude and shortsighted version of realpolitik.

Out of this murk now shines a small ray of light. It comes in the unlikely form of a State Department memorandum, recently approved, according to White House chief of staff James Baker, by President Reagan himself. The document was reportedly drafted by Elliott Abrams, who will soon move into the job Mr. Lefever couldn't get, and it is a model of clear writing and clear thinking in a form that is seldom conducive to either. The memo acknowledges that something has been amiss in the Administration's approach so far, and that this has encouraged not only political attacks and congressional recalcitrance, but also, in some measure, the "movement toward neutralism in many parts of the West." The memo recognizes that "'human rights'—meaning political rights and civil liberties—conveys what is ultimately at issue in our contest with the Soviet Union," and that a human rights policy, to be credible, "must be applied evenhandedly." It even recommends some specific actions: voting "against friendly countries [in international financial institutions] on human rights grounds if their conduct merits it" and refusing to issue export licenses for crime control equipment "in questionable cases."

There are things to quibble with in the Abrams memo. Its justification for an "evenhanded" human rights policy is cast almost entirely in terms of tactical advantage in the East-West struggle, and not at all in terms of the intrinsic rightness of such a policy. And the memo makes it clear that the Reagan Administration still has no intention of using the persuasive tool of the threat to withhold military aid, even where no important security interests are at risk. Nevertheless, given the Reagan human rights record so far, the adoption of the Abrams memo as official policy must be counted a step in the right direction. The memo's greatest virtue may be the insight with which it begins: "Human rights is at the core of our

foreign policy because it is central to what America is and stands for. 'Human rights' is not something we tack on to our foreign policy but its very purpose: the defense and promotion of freedom in the world." Or, to put it another way: "Human rights is the soul of our foreign policy because human rights is the soul of our sense of nationhood. . . . Our human rights policy is not a decoration." Those are Jimmy Carter's words, but the insight and the aspiration are the same. If Mr. Reagan's human rights policy is based almost wholly on a strategic vision, Mr. Carter's was based almost wholly on a moral one. That is why Mr. Carter tended to seem hypocritical when he chose strategic necessity over human rights and self-righteous when he didn't. He never managed to make his moral fervor for human rights a coherent part of a coherent foreign policy. But if the Carter human rights policy was flawed as an instrument of U.S. interests, it was highly effective on the level of getting political prisoners released, discouraging torture, and easing repressive conditions in countries within the orbit of U.S. influence. The strengths and weaknesses of Mr. Reagan's approach are the reverse of Mr. Carter's. Mr. Reagan's human rights approach meshes with his overall foreign policy like the teeth of a well-machined gear, but whether that approach will secure the freedoms of particular men and women anywhere in the world is open to question.

"A human rights policy means trouble, for it means hard choices which may adversely affect certain bilateral relations," says the Abrams memo. Exactly right. The real test of the Reagan policy will be the trouble its authors are willing to go to. James Baker said on NBC's "Meet the Press" that the Abrams memo does not represent a significant change in policy. We hope he turns out to be wrong. We hope that the Reagan Administration will end its reflexive coddling of dictatorships like those of Argentina and Chile; that it will use its aid negotiations with Haiti to persuade the Duvalier regime to reverse the wave of repression that began right after Mr. Reagan's election; that it will press the South African government for reform; that it will speak more unequivocally against "disappearances" at next year's session of the U.N. Human Rights Commission than it did at this year's; that it will urge the Senate to act on the still-unratified international covenants on genocide and on civil and political rights.

If these things are too much to hope for, the Administration could at least begin to make serious use of its preferred technique, "quiet diplomacy." All the evidence so far is that this slogan has been nothing but a cover for utter inaction. There has been plenty of quiet and very little diplomacy. Private persuasion is more convincing when backed by the threat of public sanction; but even without such threats, it can be a useful tool. That would mean instructing U.S. ambassadors to raise hell with the foreign offices of their host

countries when there are human rights violations, and taking the matter up at the ministerial or presidential level when the pattern of abuse becomes extreme. It's not too late for the Administration, in Mr. Abrams's words, to "be perceived as a positive force for freedom and decency." But it will take more than a memo.

The rise and fall of an American ideal.

PEACE CORPS IMPERILED

IN THE EARLY hours of a cold October morning in 1960, presidential candidate John F. Kennedy stood on the steps of the University of Michigan's student union. Addressing some 10,000 students, he asked: "How many of you are willing to spend ten years in Africa or Latin America or Asia working for the U.S. and working for freedom?" A few days later, some Michigan students sent Kennedy a list of several hundred volunteers. From this spontaneous challenge and response was born a federal agency that, for a decade, enjoyed unprecedented popularity: the Peace Corps. Bolstered in Congress by such liberal Democratic stalwarts as Senators Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota and Richard L. Neuberger of Oregon, the Peace Corps was a burst of idealism in an age when idealism was respectable. Today the Peace Corps is racked by conflicting ideologies from within and lack of federal support from without. Aside from learning to live with a drastically reduced budget, the corps faces an arsenal of questions about its status as a government agency, its purpose, and, most important, its viability as an aid program in the 1980s.

Fifteen years ago, America was rich and the Peace Corps was good-looking. Congress gave the corps over \$110 million a year to keep it that way. It had some 15,000 volunteers overseas. Today the corps's budget, in constant dollars, is less than a third of what it was in 1966. It is the only foreign assistance program to have fallen under the Stockman ax twice, leaving it with a meager \$83.6 million. The corps can barely afford its present 5,400 volunteers, and it expects to pull out of 14 to 16 of the 60 countries it now serves.

The financial squeeze has resulted in the Peace Corps's relative disappearance from the public eye. In the mid-1960s, the corps spent around seven million dollars on recruitment advertising. Now such extravagance is out of the question, and applications have plummeted from 50,000 a year to 15,000 in 1981. According to a 1979 survey, 68 percent of those questioned did not even know the Peace Corps still existed.

But budget woes aside, the hardest task the Peace Corps faces today is defining its role as an aid organiza-

tion. Over the years, the Peace Corps has been torn between two different perspectives on what its function should be. The first stresses aid from the bottom up. That means educating people and helping them meet their basic human needs. The other is an offshoot of the top-down theory. Help should come through technical assistance and training. These conflicting theories, coming in rapid succession, debilitated the agency and demoralized its staff. The original idea of the Peace Corps was distorted, and, by the late 1970s, lost in a deluge of discordant rhetoric.

WHAT WAS the original idea of the Peace Corps? When the agency was first conceived, national development on a macroeconomic scale was not a major consideration. The Peace Corps was supposed to be a people-to-people program, unashamedly idealistic, that sought to transcend politics and nationalism. Although the agency eagerly accepted volunteers like doctors and agronomists, its crew largely consisted of unskilled college graduates. As one former employee said: "The basic idea was that the Peace Corps would go out and shovel the dung that no one else would."

With the accession of Richard M. Nixon, that idea was changed. Nixon never liked the Peace Corps very much. During the 1960 presidential campaign, he called it an "overseas junket." A decade later, as President, Nixon felt the corps had been misdirected and overextended. He saw the agency not as a grass-roots program, but as a vehicle to transfer technical skills to developing nations. In 1970 the Peace Corps unveiled a program called "New Directions." The enthusiastic but inexperienced "BA generalists" were replaced by older, more narrowly skilled volunteers like mechanics and engineers. The training period was cut from about 16 weeks to seven. According to Charles Peters, who worked in the Peace Corps during the 1960s, some volunteers got as little as two weeks' training.

When Peace Corps volunteers began protesting the Vietnam War and, in May 1970, occupied the agency's headquarters at Lafayette Park across from the White House, Nixon decided to bury the corps altogether. In 1971 the Peace Corps was incorporated into Action, an umbrella agency created to house all federal volunteer efforts. The once autonomous agency that had thrived on its unbureaucratic style was bureaucratized. And politicized. The corps lost its separate recruiting arm. Its identity vanished in the Action superstructure. To ensure staff loyalty, Nixon appointed Alan May to head Action's personnel department. May promptly fired the Peace Corps director and 33 of the country directors. Their positions were never filled. In addition, some 250 Washington senior staffers were replaced by political appointees. The corps became, according to one employee, "the great dumping ground for Republicans." In June 1977 May was indicted by a federal grand jury for conducting a partisan hiring program at Action. He pleaded guilty.

The Nixon rampage had its effects. With its emphasis on skilled technicians, New Directions narrowed the Peace Corps's recruiting base and greatly decreased the number of acceptable candidates. The creation of Action further sharpened the corps's recruiting dilemma by drastically reducing the agency's visibility. The number of volunteers in the field dropped from over 14,000 in 1968 to under 7,000 in 1972. New Directions was also a disaster overseas. Although the third world was demanding people with greater skills, the answer lay in honing the corps's training programs, not in looking for pre-trained volunteers. The Nixon recruits were less adaptable and had a harder time learning new languages than the BA generalists. In the bush, new Peace Corps people tended to live in compounds reminiscent of British colonialists. The Peace Corps was fast becoming a mini-AID, and an ineffective one at that.

When Jimmy Carter took office, it seemed the Peace Corps would be put back on the right track. To a certain extent it was. Unlike Nixon, Carter believed aid should be directed toward fulfilling basic human needs. Sam Brown, whom Carter appointed to head Action, shared this conviction. As an antiwar activist and political organizer, and as the elected state treasurer of Colorado, Brown had built a reputation as a smart and creative leader. He seemed just the man to breathe life into the moribund Peace Corps. Brown redirected the agency toward helping the "poorest of the poor," and, along with Peace Corps director Richard Celeste, reinvigorated the training programs. The number of volunteers who bailed out before the end of their two-year stint quickly dropped from 65 percent to 30 percent, and the yearly decline in new volunteers was checked.

BUT LIKE NIXON, Brown approached the Peace Corps with his own idea of what it should be. He felt the corps suffered from "cultural imperialism." He claimed that "the missionary zeal that gave us the Peace Corps was not far from the zeal that gave us the Vietnam War." This ideological bias took its toll on the agency's operation. One volatile issue was Brown's objection to the Peace Corps's education programs. He believed the Corps had no business teaching English in countries where there was a high degree of illiteracy in the native language. But as critics point out, he went too far. He had directives issued which threatened to kill a wide range of education projects. The agency turned into a battleground for Brown's supporters and his critics. Finally, when Richard Celeste took over as Peace Corps director in 1979, he commissioned a country-by-country review to settle the dispute. Completed in November 1980, the report showed massive support for the corps's education program. In fact, the worldwide demand for education was 50 percent higher than what the Peace Corps could fill. As one critic then said of Brown: "He is wrong in his

analysis of what the Peace Corps has been and he is wrong in attempting to make it over in a radical-chic image of the third world."

After so many ideological spasms, the agency is confused. Many critics of the agency say that, given the new political assertiveness of the third world, the Peace Corps has outlived its purpose. Michael Balzano, a former Action director under the Nixon and Ford Administrations, believes the corps's decline is less a result of policy decisions from Washington than of its waning popularity in third world countries. "The significant rise in nationalism in many countries" has made them "reluctant to turn to foreigners to fill positions of relative authority." Balzano claims that the third world now wants do-it-yourself volunteer efforts and looks to the Peace Corps for technical guidance, not altruistic handouts.

These arguments are illogical as well as incorrect. How can a country like Togo or Dominica, which barely has the means to feed its people, afford to launch large-scale volunteer programs? How many of the few educated nationals would be willing to go out in the bush? And if such a rechanneling of indigenous human resources were possible, which is doubtful, would it be in the interest of the country's development? Clearly not. What makes the Peace Corps possible is that, unlike less developed countries, the United States is rich enough to afford a major volunteer program. The notion that the demand for the corps is waning simply is not true. Because of budget constraints, the corps can fill barely 70 percent of volunteer requests. In fact, the agency has long been encouraging countries to reduce their demands. If the door were thrown open, the corps has estimated that it would receive an additional 8,000 requests.

ACCORDING to Celeste, with the Peace Corps's recent success in fish farming, agriculture, and alternative energy source programs, "the Peace Corps is more relevant today than it was 20 years ago." The World Bank agrees. Its *World Development Report, 1980*, stressed that "human resource development" was the key to national development, and stated that primary education is one of the most effective ways "to help the poorest climb out of their poverty." Both former World Bank president Robert McNamara and AID director M. Peter McPherson have praised the Peace Corps for its work in these areas. The Peace Corps does not need to be born again ideologically pure, as Brown would have had it, or remade into a private technical agency, as Balzano advises. "The corps needs, more than anything else," said former volunteer Roger Landrum, "to be guided around those riding ideological hobbyhorses and passing out glib phrases."

The Peace Corps also needs to be separated from Action. At the urging of Senator Alan Cranston, Democrat of California, the Senate voted on October 22 to do just that. Cranston's bill would restore to the

agency its original autonomy and, it is hoped, its former visibility. The issue has yet to reach the House, but Representative Don Bonker, Democrat of Washington, has already prepared a bill similar to Cranston's. Bonker goes one step farther. His bill not only would separate the Peace Corps from Action, it would also make the agency a quasi-public corporation. This is the best idea to come along yet. Critics argue that such a scheme would make the Peace Corps, like the Legal Services Corporation, too independent from the government. Yet this is precisely why it should be done. The plan would also free the corps from its total dependence on the government by allowing it to seek funds from the private sector. The idea is still in an embryonic stage, but it might very well solve the corps's most immediate problem: money.

BUT THE onus of reinvigorating the Peace Corps ultimately lies with the President. To justify the Administration's tax breaks for the rich and its systematic pummeling of social and federal aid programs, Reagan has made much to-do about the spirit of volunteerism in this country. But volunteerism will not become the noblesse oblige that Reagan, in his simplism, thinks it will without some leadership. "The Peace Corps is the kind of entity which requires a prophetic, almost spiritual leadership—more so than any other agency in government," says Sargent Shriver. "It's like the Marine Corps. It is a service which depends for its quality and motivation on this spirit. And the best person to give it that spirit is the President." It is this spirit that is lacking today. Nor can it blossom while the Administration insists on repeating the Nixon tactic of putting its thumbprint everywhere. A good many Peace Corps staffers have already been fired for "political disloyalty" by the White House. And, says one corps administrator, those remaining have been asked to produce letters from Republican representatives as atonement for having served under Democrats. Even Peace Corps director Loret Miller Ruppe, a Republican appointment, has been branded anti-Reagan.

Today the U.S. spends \$11 million less per year on the Peace Corps than it spends on military marching bands. Clearly it can never be the financially unfettered program it was under Kennedy. But neither should it be allowed to fade away, or to become just another foreign aid agency. As countless U.S. and foreign ambassadors will attest, the Peace Corps is the best public relations agency this nation possesses. And the 80,000 returned volunteers are an invaluable asset to our understanding of the third world (two senators, three representatives, and the head of AID are returned Peace Corps volunteers). The passion and idealism of the Peace Corps are still there. They just need to be revived.

MICHAEL A. LERNER

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WHITE HOUSE WATCH

THE SINISTER FORCE RETURNS

BY MORTON KONDRACKE

PEOPLE WHO worked with Alexander Haig back in the Nixon White House can't believe this is the same man they once knew. "He was always ready to do battle with 'the bastards' and the 'forces of darkness,'" one of these former associates says, "but now he's much more hyper, erratic, supersensitive." Another Nixon-Ford veteran says, "The old Haig was a much more skillful operator. Very rarely did you see the public hand of Al Haig. He always had a conspiratorial bent and an Irish temper, but he was under control. Apparently not now, though. Now he seems erratic."

The old Alexander Haig, say his former cohorts, would have known better than to call columnist Jack Anderson—and provoke a call to Anderson from the President—over a routine story about intramural backbiting in the Administration. "Haig behaved as if he had never worked in the White House before," said an official who is now in his second tour. "A rational person, acting rationally, would have said to himself, 'I want to minimize the attention given to this story. Nobody believes what Jack Anderson writes, anyway. The thing to do is to leave this alone.' Haig is acting as if he feels very insecure and needs personal reaffirmation from the President. Criticism eats him up. It churns inside him. He can't let it go."

Haig's former co-workers say they don't know exactly what causes him to act as he does—they say Haig does not really confide in anybody about his troubles, calling only to report successes—but they speculate that the difference between the old Haig and the new one is that he is now "out on his own" for the first time, no longer taking orders from Henry Kissinger or defending Richard Nixon against real enemies and "sinister forces." Possibly, they say, he still wants to be President some day and feels his chances are slipping away.

Armchair analysis of Alexander Haig again has become a favorite indoor diversion in Washington, of course, because of Haig's excessive reaction to a new round of press reports that President Reagan might soon shake up his foreign policy team, firing Haig and/or national security adviser Richard Allen. President Reagan has firmly and repeatedly denied any such intent and has moved to quiet discord among his

underlings. But it's almost unanimously accepted that the intrigue will continue; indeed, it does continue, particularly against Allen. And it's now widely accepted that President Reagan needs to do something about foreign policymaking in his Administration before some disaster occurs. The clash of personalities is playing an important part in the foreign policy disarray in Washington, but so is the confused structure of policymaking. The latter may shortly tell in the substance of U.S. foreign policy. Some say it already has.

I can't diagnose Alexander Haig any better than his old comrades can, but it's clear from examining the record of his behavior that in certain circumstances he can't control himself and that he desperately needs to have someone around who will stand in his way and scream at him when he's inclined to do something self-destructive. Haig has enemies in the Administration, but if he ever does get fired, he will be largely responsible for it. He moved in on Reagan too fast on Inauguration Day with a proposal that he be made not just vicar of foreign policy but pope, angering not only the top White House staff, but Nancy Reagan, too, whose dismay reportedly was transmitted to the press by Michael Deaver, the presidential aide closest to the Reagan family. Haig threw a public tantrum when Vice President Bush—and not he—was named official crisis manager. He inappropriately thrust himself into "control" at the White House when President Reagan was shot. He made a huge issue of Communist aid to the El Salvador guerrillas at a time when the White House wanted the economy to get first priority. Apparently he has repeatedly threatened to resign over what the White House staff considers petty turf issues. The word is out that he berates subordinates unmercifully in front of their peers, calling them stupid when their honest suggestions displease him. A witness to one such performance called it "infantile" and "inexcusable."

There is a cultural and political, as well as personal, background to the Haig-White House differences. Haig came to his job with the handicap of being a Kissinger person rather than a conservative Californian; unfortunately, he has not overcome it. The laid-

back, nice-guy approach is accepted style among the Californians, but Haig has been uptight and quick to resort to the fabled Kissingerian device of immediately elevating issues to crisis proportions to get them resolved. The Californians have accepted very few former Ford Administration aides into the "family"—White House chief of staff James Baker is close to making it, by virtue of loyalty, deftness, and cool—and Haig's behavior emphatically has not won him access. Policy has not been at the heart of Haig's differences with the White House, but presumably it's never far from the minds of the Californians that Haig used to be an agent of Kissingerian policies (detente, rapprochement with China) that Reagan got nominated by opposing. It's interesting that the oft-rumored shake-up in the Reagan foreign policy team—Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger to State, White House counselor Edwin Meese to Defense, and Deputy Secretary of State William Clark to the National Security Council—would amount to a California coup.

If Haig were replaced, some Administration officials and outside observers think U.S. policy might well tilt away from China and toward

Taiwan, away from Israel and toward Saudi Arabia, away from arms control and toward reflexive anti-Sovietism, away from alliance diplomacy and toward U.S. unilateralism. On the other hand, the Californians seem much less obsessed than Haig with the need to stop communism in Central America and to make life difficult for Libya's Muammar Qaddafi. At the moment, though, the key difference is that the Californians don't know much about foreign policy and Haig does. This, plus a reluctance to show disunity to the world, probably keeps the current team in place,

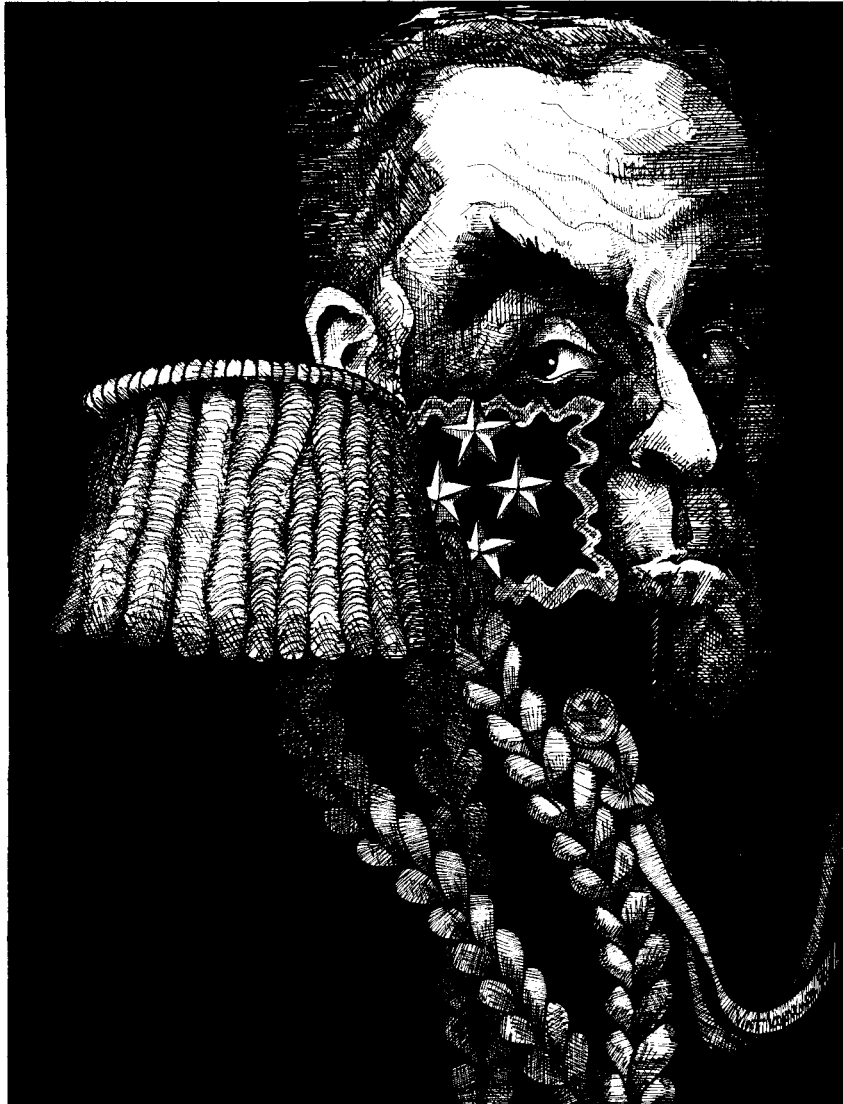
but it won't do so forever unless Haig somehow settles down.

Rumors of unhappiness with Haig had been in remission for several weeks before the latest outburst, and it seemed established that if Haig was not beloved by the Reaganites, at least he was respected as a good diplomat. European leaders certainly prefer him to Weinberger, who (until just last week) had made a habit of showing not the slightest deference to so-called "nuclear neuralgia" in Europe. Haig ought to

have been basking in the glow of having been right on two big recent issues. Had he been listened to instead of Weinberger and Meese, the Administration would have delayed announcement of the Awacs sale to Saudi Arabia, thereby sparing Reagan the debilitating legislative fight just ended. And it was Haig's successful last-minute pleading that prevented flat U.S. rejection of North-South global negotiations, thereby avoiding a disaster at the Cancún summit where President Reagan might have been portrayed as the Scrooge of the world.

I don't know who resumed the internal bickering, but I doubt that it was either Allen

or Baker, both of whom Haig first suspected. Press rumors of a housecleaning had made Allen out to be as much a victim as Haig, and although Allen has emerged stronger after the latest round than before it (his fate is now tied to Haig's), it would seem dangerous for any official to try to save himself by planting stories that he was about to be fired. Baker theoretically has a motive for engineering a shakeup: with Meese at the Defense Department, Baker would be top man at the White House. But Baker surely knows that the way to get things done in White House politics is by talking to



DRAWING OF ALEXANDER HAIG BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

the President, not by leaking rumors to the press.

Whoever is plotting against Haig, one Democratic wise man said, "maneuvered him right into the sights of his own shotgun." I think it is just possible that this time no one set out on a specific mission to undercut Haig. But there is strong feeling in the White House and elsewhere that Allen should be replaced and that the Reagan Administration's foreign policy machinery should be revised to provide for a stronger National Security Council staff. New pressure for Allen's replacement may have been combined with played-back rumors of unhappiness with Haig to produce the stories that then set off Haig's overreaction. One key article, an October 27 column by Joseph Kraft, basically was a call for Allen's ouster. A follow-up television report by Bob Schieffer of CBS cited a White House source as observing, "You hear more and more people around here saying that this setup just hasn't worked." This is on the mark. But the source wouldn't confirm the "back-channel scenario" sending Weinberger to State, Meese to Defense, and Haig and Allen out the door.

AS FOR THE Jack Anderson column, it was especially thin. It was apparently based not on any highest-level interviews at the White House by Anderson himself, but on a conversation with "White House sources" conducted by Anderson associate Ron McRae. The juiciest items—that Haig was top man on Reagan's "disappointment list" and that Haig "reportedly has one foot on a banana peel"—were attributed only to "insiders" or not to any source at all. What "White House sources" allegedly said was not even in quotation marks. Instead of ignoring the column, Haig overreacted by calling Anderson twice and by calling the President, who called Anderson, too. Anderson ended up with an even better story, quoting Haig as saying that someone in the White House was conducting a "guerrilla campaign" against him. The following day, meaning to correct an error in the Anderson column, State Department spokesman Dean Fischer inadvertently confirmed the "guerrilla" remark, giving the episode another day on Page 1.

This was not the end of Haig's problems. Intending to get the President out of diplomatic trouble for saying he could envision a limited nuclear war in Europe, Haig volunteered in Senate testimony that the U.S. might launch a "demonstrative" nuclear blast in case of a Soviet attack. Haig was flatly contradicted the following day by Weinberger, who said NATO war plans call for nothing "remotely resembling" any such shot. This episode, more than the Anderson column, convinces me that Haig has real enemies. Weinberger breakfasted with Haig on the very morning that he issued his contradiction. Late in the day, the White House managed to get out a statement trying to reconcile the Haig and Weinberger statements. Why didn't Weinberger work out the reconciliation at breakfast? One

can only conclude that Weinberger meant to embarrass Haig and to make himself seem the nuclear moderate and Haig the wild man.

What all of this cries out for is presidential intervention—not just to end the bickering, but to establish a structure that coordinates foreign policy statements and actual policy. Historically, when a President didn't want to run foreign policy himself, he farmed it out to a strong Secretary of State like John Foster Dulles or Dean Acheson. Presidents who did want to be active hired strong national security advisers like McGeorge Bundy and Henry Kissinger. Jimmy Carter didn't know what he wanted, so he had a Secretary of State and a national security adviser who constantly fought over basic policy issues. Reagan apparently doesn't know what he wants, either. Nearly 11 months into the Administration, there still is no presidential directive setting down the responsibilities and prerogatives of the various foreign policy agencies.

IN PRACTICE, the NSC has been emasculated, but the Secretary of State has not been empowered to manage foreign policy either. Meese, the White House policy chief, has downgraded the NSC to strictly staff functions such as preparing option papers and briefing memoranda for the President. The NSC has lost the power to call meetings, negotiate and mediate among agencies, narrow options, and coordinate policy implementation after a presidential decision. Allen, unlike his predecessors, doesn't report to the President. He reports to Meese, who has little foreign policy background. Allen does not even see the President every day, so that he has lost the propinquity that empowered other NSC advisers to say "the President wants . . ." and get cooperation from State, Defense, the CIA, Treasury, and other foreign policy agencies. As Reagan's campaign adviser on foreign policy, Allen advocated a downgraded NSC and he has acquiesced in establishment of the current nonsystem. If the NSC were to be strengthened, he probably would have to be fired. But Allen's departure alone will make no difference unless the system is changed too.

"The present system is accident-prone," said an experienced foreign policy official. "Allen can't operate it. Meese doesn't have the time or the background to monitor it. They won't let Al do it. So there's a shotgun approach. Whoever gets in the back door to see the President can get the decision made his way. Sooner or later, a disaster is bound to happen." This official thinks that the Awacs decision was just a warning of things to come, and so do I. In the end, what's required is for President Reagan to spend as much energy and time paying attention to foreign policy as he does to domestic policy. If he really thinks (as he indicated in his latest press conference) that getting through 70 meetings with foreign emissaries constitutes a coherent foreign policy, it shows how much he still has to learn.

A movement's success is its own undoing.

TWILIGHT OF THE TAX REVOLT

By BOB KUTTNER

Palo Alto, California

THE HOOVER INSTITUTION threw a conference-cum-party last month to celebrate the triumph of the tax revolt and to plan the final assault on the welfare state. The event, titled "Constraining Federal Taxing and Spending," brought together about 70 of the leading tax limitation activists and scholars, many of whom now serve in the Reagan Administration. The Hoover people graciously included a few mildly bewildered token liberals.

The final assault is a constitutional amendment to limit, once and for all, government's power to tax and spend. This idea has been moving along two tracks for about a decade. The first track involves limiting government spending to a fixed share of personal income. The prototype, fittingly, was a 1973 California ballot initiative sponsored by Governor Ronald Reagan. That one lost narrowly at the polls, but Reagan's followers went on to set up the National Tax Limitation Committee, which has been promoting fixed-limit amendments to both the federal Constitution and those of the states. (Nine states have adopted such amendments so far.) The second track simply calls for a balanced budget. The main sponsor of this approach is the libertarian National Taxpayers Union, and 30 state legislatures, out of a required 34, have called for a constitutional convention to enact an amendment that would require the federal government to balance its budget.

The tax limiters and the balanced-budget people have their differences, but last July all factions agreed on a single grand amendment which makes Siamese twins of the two approaches. The measure, introduced as Senate Joint Resolution 58, would both hold federal revenues at their present share of GNP and require the federal budget to be balanced. Exceptions would be possible in emergencies, but they would require larger than usual majorities of Congress to go along. This ultimate amendment has already been co-sponsored by a majority of the U.S. Senate.

The timing is seemingly perfect. The public sector continues to get terrible press. Congress's mood remains so parsimonious that liberals now bait conser-

vatives for deficit spending. A broad public finally accepts the dogma that inflation is caused by unbalanced budgets. The largest tax cut in history has just taken effect, and the Gipper is in the White House. Besides, the brief for constitutional tax limitation is not wholly without intellectual appeal. Any liberal who knows Washington must admit that federal agencies prefer expansion whether or not it helps them carry out their purported mission.

But as the Hoover conference progressed, a delicious irony began to dawn upon its small liberal caucus: tax cutting has probably doomed constitutional tax limitation. Even as the conferees were parsing the merits of spending limitation versus tax limitation, Reagan's own budget officials were projecting a mind-boggling 1984 deficit of \$145 billion. The President's tax advisers were bickering over whether to press for what the White House delicately calls "revenue enhancement."

In the fiscal arithmetic—noted in some nervous asides at the Hoover summit—there is mounting evidence that constitutional tax limitation is an idea whose time has gone before it quite arrived. Imagine the political situation if such an amendment were in force today. With the 1982 budget deficit projected at \$85 billion, Reagan would be scrambling to impose new taxes. And not the piddling increases in alcohol and tobacco taxes his staff is talking about, but massive tax increases—in a recession! Surely not even Reagan could find another \$85 billion in program cuts. Alternatively, in order to corral the extra votes necessary to waive the balanced budget requirement, he would be fatally dependent on the Democratic opposition.

In short, the Republicans have torpedoed the movement for constitutional tax limitation by overdoing the 1981 tax cut. Not that the tax cut sates the public's appetite for tax relief. The average voter gets very little relief. Lest we forget, the oil companies are getting \$32 billion in tax concessions they hardly needed. The corporate income tax has been all but abolished under a peculiar formula that leaves the most dynamic industries with the smallest tax subsidies. The number of estates paying any inheritance tax has been pared to well under one percent. The "all savers" tax preference

Bob Kuttner is editor of *Working Papers* magazine and author of *Revolt of the Haves* (Simon & Schuster).

does very little for the national savings rate, but will cost the Treasury at least \$10 billion this year, three times the original projection—not to mention the effect it's having on the municipal bond market. The White House plainly gave away the store, and got little in return but a catastrophic deficit.

To be fair, the Republicans were goaded into this folly by the Democrats' appalling attempt to outbid them. But mercifully the Democrats' gambit failed, so the Republicans get to reap all the political damage. Reagan may have invented constitutional tax limitation, but in the current fiscal wreckage it is the last thing he needs.

Beyond the immediate revenue debacle, persuasive evidence on the expenditure side of the equation indicates a need for more government spending, not less. According to the tax-limitation ideology, bureaucrats become their own constituency. Without the discipline of constitutional restraint, therefore, government must grow inexorably. But the aggregate statistics of recent government spending suggest a rather different picture.

If Social Security transfers are excluded (they are mainly a product of demographics), federal outlays today, before Reagan's 1981-82 cuts, consume a lower fraction of GNP than they did in 1970. If the cost of debt service is excluded (it reflects crushing interest costs, not a proportionally bigger debt), the drop in government outlays for services since 1970 is even sharper.

At the state and local level, the decline is still more dramatic. Most state and local governments are desperately short of revenues to finance basic public services. Municipal governments are squeezed between high interest costs, shrinking federal grants, and the tax limitation measures so popular in the late 1970s. The political winds are rapidly shifting in the direction of tax increases rather than tax limitation.

LONG BEFORE REAGAN, data compiled by the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations showed that by 1979 total state and local spending as a fraction of personal income was well below the level of 1975, and dropping. The total state and local payroll has been declining relative to population since 1973. Even property taxes, which triggered the great tax revolt, have dropped by about 20 percent as a share of income since 1972.

This shift is increasingly reflected in public opinion polls and at the ballot box. In California, where voters approved Proposition 13 in June 1978 by a margin of 65 to 35 percent, they rejected "Jarvis II" (to cut state income taxes) by almost the same margin two years later. The five Jarvis imitations on the 1980 ballot, in Arizona, Nevada, Oregon, South Dakota, and Utah, all lost. In Massachusetts, where just a year ago voters did approve a massive property tax limitation, Proposition 2½, service cuts have been extreme, and

polls show that Proposition 2½ would lose today. Most Bay State politicians are contemplating new taxes.

Even in California, where Proposition 13 has remained popular, the state surplus has finally run out, and an indexing provision which automatically cuts tax rates to adjust inflation has eaten into the state income tax. A formidable coalition is gearing up to qualify a ballot initiative that authorizes taxing business property at a higher rate than homeowners. As the Hoover Institution's resident tax revolt expert, Alvin Rabushka, candidly declared, "The tax revolt has largely subsided within the 50 states . . . it would be wrong to see the Reagan tax cuts as an extension or consequence of the tax revolt touched off by Howard Jarvis in 1978."

THE FACT is that collapsing services and decaying facilities are becoming a far bigger issue locally than tax relief. A spate of recent newspaper articles has publicized the advanced disrepair of local public infrastructure. A recent book, *America in Ruins*, by Pat Choate and Susan Walter (published by the Council of State Planning Agencies), documents the rate of public disinvestment. According to Choate and Walter, city and state spending in real dollars for basic infrastructure in 1980 was only slightly more than half the level of 1970. Local government capital spending has dropped from 4.1 percent of the GNP in 1965 to 2.3 percent in 1977. It will decline more sharply still when the Reagan cuts are fully effective. Over the next two decades, because of past deferrals of maintenance, it will cost \$700 billion just to maintain present highways in their present condition. With no upgrading of water quality, big cities will need an estimated \$110 billion just to maintain their existing water systems. New York City alone will require about \$30 billion more between now and 1990 to maintain bridges, streets, and sewers.

In a recent cover story directly challenging the premises of the Reagan program, *Business Week* warned:

The growth of the nation's great manufacturing centers with their dense concentrations of population, was heavily dependent on public spending. . . . There is no reason to believe that this historical necessity for balanced investment has come to an end. So even if President Reagan's economic program does unleash a surge of private investment, it would be likely to abort if state and local government cannot find the wherewithal to build the public facilities needed for support.

Oddly enough, the apparent zenith of tax revolt actually portends a real fiscal opening to the left. The obvious need for tax increases at both the state and federal level invites attention to an honorable issue of political economy that has been utterly ignored lately: distribution. If taxes must be raised, who shall pay them? The opportunity is there for a frontal challenge to the idea that growth must require inequity. By the same token, the accelerating collapse of public services

invites a defense of the public sector that is also long overdue. John Kenneth Galbraith might update and reissue his *The Affluent Society*. His picture of private excess and public want is far more compelling now than in 1958. Unfortunately, liberal economics policy is remarkably barren. Other than the prodigious Lester Thurow (whose liberalism is tempered by his infatuation with the market), the Tobin-Heller generation has left few heirs. As supply-side economics self-destructs, who will pick up the pieces?

The Hoover conference left a vivid image of conser-

vatives intellectually ascendant and liberals tired and defensive. The average age of conservatives at the Hoover summit was perhaps 35; liberals averaged 55. The tax limitation movement, energized by its political successes, has built an impressive body of theory and a wide network of scholars, publicists, and political allies. A new economics graduate student of no fixed ideology will find most of the action (and the funding) on the right. He will find hundreds of diverse right-wing mentors to choose from and few on the left save the Marxists. (As American capitalism writhes, the Marx-

HOOVERISM AT HOOVER

The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace was founded by Herbert Hoover himself in 1919. Today it boasts a \$40-million endowment, a \$7-million annual operating budget, and an extensive publication program. Much of the budget comes from corporate contributions. Liberal think tanks are starving for lack of federal grants, but Hoover doesn't have to worry. Only two percent of its money comes from public funds.

Every three months, Hoover publishes a volume titled "Hoover Essays." As thick as a medium-sized telephone directory, it is a collection of reprints of newspaper op-ed pieces written by people associated with Hoover. It is a testimony to effective ideological marketing.

George Marotta, Hoover's affable public affairs coordinator, and his assistant, Mary Anne Gilpatrick, cull Hoover's outpouring of speeches, papers, congressional testimony, and forthcoming books for material that can be recycled to op-ed length. These pieces are cleared with the author and sent out gratis at an average rate of one a day to some 125 op-ed editors known to be receptive to Hoover material. Last summer, op-ed pieces adapted from a single Hoover book, Thomas Sowell's *Ethnic America*, appeared in the July 28 *Wall Street Journal* (affirmative action hurts blacks); the August 11 and 12 *New York Times* (education is no cure for poverty); and the August 23 *Los Angeles Times* (much poverty is a statistical illusion).

Brookings Institution, the closest thing to a liberal Hoover, has always

been far more polite about ideological combat. The one leftish think tank I could find that systematically markets op-ed material is Gar Alperovitz's National Center for Economic Alternatives, which draws upon a far smaller body of research.

* * *

On the terrace of the Hoover Institution, Milton Friedman is holding forth. He is a bit over five feet tall, tanned and wiry. Even Friedman is puzzled over the high interest rates. "I just can't explain it," he says. "During the 48 months prior to July 1980, short-term interest rates were *negative*. For 13 of the 14 months since July 1980, they've been positive, by seven or eight points. There has never been a year like this in the last 100. And it isn't the result of the federal borrowing, which just isn't that big compared to GNP."

"Can't you think of anything?" somebody presses. "The only thing I can think of," says the great man, "and it isn't a very good explanation, is this: it's a bubble, just like the Tulip bubble or the South Sea bubble. It's a money bubble."

* * *

"It terrifies me that even Friedman can't explain interest rates," says my seat-mate on the shuttle bus between Hoover and the Palo Alto Holiday Inn, an executive of one of America's largest corporations. Interest rates are killing his company's investment plans. But what about the great 1981 tax cut? Won't it unleash new investment?

"In the short run, it doesn't do anything. We invest when we think we can sell more products. It does

improve our cash flow, but if the tax cut does stimulate demand for product, it will be for mainly Keynesian reasons."

In other words, the tax cut didn't have to go mainly to corporations and wealthy investors. It could have gone to anybody.

* * *

An anonymous draft bill turns up on everyone's desk titled "Progressive Balanced Budget System of 1981." It begins:

Whereas the Economic Recovery Act of 1981 and previous revenue legislation make abundantly clear that tax legislation in the United States Congress is uniformly biased toward exempting, excluding, and deducting sources of income from taxation and

Whereas this bias results in an insufficiency of federal government receipts relative to federal outlays and

Whereas it is well known that the resultant budget deficits sap the vital juices of our Nation, *be it resolved* that Congress shall enact the

ALL SCHNORRERS AMENDMENT

Sec. 1. Congress shall make no law reducing federal receipts below that level required to meet the previous year's outlay adjusted for the growth in national income.

Sec. 2 Such outlays that are distributed to any State and/or local government shall be reduced by the amount that such State and local government has reduced its taxes relative to personal income. . . .

Bob Hartman of Brookings confesses authorship. The liberals are feeling a bit better. A refrain keeps running through my head, from the musical "Annie." It goes: "We'd like to thank you Herbert Hoover/You made us what we are today. . . ."

B.K.

ian section of the academic catacomb is bristling with vitality, though the Marxists prefer *explication de texte* to current policy topics.)

The right also offers inventive, challenging policy disputation. Milton Friedman was the centrist of the Hoover conference. He was reverentially attacked by wayward disciples, who themselves were often at odds. (Confronted by one of the callow goldbugs who find his brand of monetarism far too tame, Friedman demanded indignantly: "Where did you get your economics training, anyway?" The fellow blanched and said softly, "The University of Chicago.") A rising star named Robert Hall, from a quite different wing of the new right, plaintively wondered why Friedman refused to go all the way and "deregulate money." If banks were permitted to issue interest-bearing notes, as in the glory days of 19th-century free banking, there would be no need for government to meddle in monetary policy at all. Such ideas may be wacky, and they may be splendidly oblivious to historical glitches like financial panics, but at least they reflect inventive, fertile discourse.

THE TAX limitation movement does raise disturbing issues about the peculiar failure of the American welfare state, which deserve careful thought by its defenders. Much of the analysis turns out to have a useful double edge. For example, Professor Peter Aranson of Emory University argued quite persuasively against "public choice" theory, which sees government activity as the product of individual preferences. Public spending, Aranson said, is not driven by the desire for public goods at all. Even outlays for broad public purposes such as defense, highways, education, or clean air are really "divisible private goods." That is, the political juice comes from the particular interest groups that get contracts and subsidies. This is presented as a conservative argument for tax limitation. But it also suggests a radical conclusion: the main problem of the American welfare state is that it is overly privatized. Thanks to the liberal habit of buying off powerful opposition, no social purpose can be accomplished without dealing in, say, insurance companies to administer Medicare, real estate developers to build low-income housing, arms manufacturers to provide weapons systems, and so on. There's good money to be made here. No wonder

our welfare state is so wasteful and inefficient.

At one point in the conference, Milton Friedman passed me a note. "I challenge you," it began, "to name any program designed to help the disadvantaged financed by taxes on people with more income than those who are benefited." Delighted, I hastily scrawled, "Public schools, Social Security, Medicaid, public housing." But Friedman had me cold. Public schools, he wrote back, are a tax shelter for the middle class, which gets far better public education for its kids than the poor. Social Security is financed by regressive taxes. Public housing has destroyed more units than it built. Medicaid is a boon to unscrupulous upper-income slum doctors. And so on. Some benefits trickle down, but our welfare state really has a very hard time redistributing very much.

FRIEDMAN'S remedy, of course, is to smash the state. "The ideal size of the public sector," he told the conference, "is the biblical tithe—ten percent." But much of the conservative analysis inadvertently points toward better remedies. Surely there is no logical reason why taxes *have* to be regressive, or why public services *have* to be shoddy. The European social democrats have understood far better than the American liberals the political logic of universal, socialized programs. If everybody benefits from public education, day care, child allowances, national health, old age pensions, and the like, the constituency will be relatively powerful and the quality relatively high. But when programs are restricted to the "truly needy," services limited to the poor tend to be poor services; and if the welfare state is predicated on nothing more than altruism, then its political support blows away in stormy weather. It is hardly accidental that the one apparently invincible bastion of the American welfare state is our one universal program, Social Security.

The Hoover summit provided a striking metaphor for the current liberal dilemma. The sponsors put the two invited liberal budget analysts, Robert Reischauer and Robert Hartman, onto a panel mischievously titled "A Defense of the Status Quo." That is surely no place for a liberal. Initially, the few opponents of tax limitation argued against the proposed constitutional strictures mainly on technical grounds: the Constitution is no place for an economic dogma; Reagan's budget cuts prove that the existing statutory budget process, uh, works well enough; Henry Aaron of the Brookings Institution pleaded that constitutional limits would only lead to more budgetary subterfuge, things like mandates to the states and the private sector, off-budget outlays, regulatory gimmicks, tax expenditures. True enough, responded the conservatives with impeccable logic; but that only argues for even more stringent constitutional limits.

Toward the end of the conference, however, a few of the opponents grew bold enough to challenge the substance of the tax limitation ideology and its hidden



COMING

Notes on the
Weather Underground.

distributional bias. After all, the public sector grew mainly as a way of reducing society's inequities. As the public sector is cut, the outlays that survive are things like dairy subsidies, synfuels, military contracts, and Eximbank. It is welfare expenditures that get the ax. Conservatives love to invoke the 19th-century fiscal theorist Adolf Wagner, who postulated that the spread of democratic suffrage generates steady growth in government taxing and spending. But a corollary to Wagner's Law must be that cuts in public outlays hurt the needy disproportionately.

It is also quite evident from Reagan's current budgetary nightmare that mechanical tax or budget formulas would place government in a fiscal straitjacket. Keynesianism may be in tatters, but no Administration—whether it is invoking supply-side gods or

demand-side demons—wishes forever to deny itself the option of fiscal stimulus.

In the last session of the Hoover conference, Professor Richard Musgrave, the most eminent public finance scholar among the liberal delegation, cleared his throat. "I think constitutional tax limitation is a bad idea," he said, "because I just might wish to argue for a larger public sector." Despite the tax revolt, public services are still far more popular than their absence. It may take some time for liberals to grow comfortable again defending such outmoded ideas as progressive taxation, public works, and government spending in general. But surely that approach makes far better political sense than their current efforts, in which their raised voices sound only like tinny echoes of the conservative choir.

No longer just a union but a 'social movement.'

SOLIDARITY'S DILEMMA

BY ABRAHAM BRUMBERG

ALMOST FROM its inception in the summer of 1980, Poland's huge trade union movement, Solidarity, has been faced with a painful dilemma: how to reconcile its declared goal of remaking Poland into a functioning democracy with its profound reluctance to participate in the country's decision-making process. Solidarity's reluctance is understandable, and its suspicion of the party's plea for a "partnership" is well-founded. The notion of "partnership," after all, is the very foundation, theoretically, of Poland's Communist system. In the late 1940s, when "people's democracies" came into being in Eastern Europe, Soviet theoreticians went to considerable pains to point out that they would differ substantially from a one-party state such as their own. In Eastern Europe, they said, classes other than the working class (like the peasantry and the petite bourgeoisie) would survive for a long time, and would therefore have to be represented in the structure of power. One of the authors of the theory of a people's democracy, the Soviet economist Eugene Varga, even suggested that "a parliamentary democracy of the Western type may well prove to be a viable

form of government for these states." But his formula also embraced the concept of the "leading role of the party," which "would make it certain that these governments will serve the people rather than the monopolist bourgeoisie"—and would effectively deprive the party's "partners" of any power whatsoever.

In good Marxist-Leninist fashion, the theory has indeed proved to be a "guide to action." Since 1951, Poland (like some of its neighbors) has been ruled by a sham parliamentary democracy in which both the Democratic and Peasant parties, ostensibly representing the middle class and peasantry, have faithfully implemented all the policies of their leading partner—the Polish United Workers [i.e., Communist] Party. This arrangement (embodied in the Front of National Unity), like many other institutions designed to camouflage the party's monopoly of power, never fooled anyone. Why, then, should Solidarity even have considered taking part in yet another fraudulent scheme? And why should Solidarity enter into a partnership in which it would share responsibility for the disastrous policies of the past and for new policies dictated by a thoroughly discredited regime?

In an attempt to resolve its dilemma, Solidarity at first worked out an idea of itself as a kind of pressure group. Solidarity would represent the interests of the

Abraham Brumberg, a frequent contributor to these pages, is writing a book on Poland, to be published next spring.

Polish nation writ large. It would go on representing these interests, negotiating with the authorities on any issues that affected the welfare of the union's constituents, and insisting that the authorities seek the union's approval for any piece of legislation connected with the 21 points of the Gdansk Agreement of August 31, 1980 (which included, in addition to economic demands, matters such as freedom of information and association, public access to the media, and an end to political persecution and religious discrimination). At the same time, the union insisted that by refusing to participate in the decision-making process, by leaving the apparatus of power entirely in the hands of the authorities, it disclaimed any intention of playing a political role in managing the country's affairs.

Solidarity's position could be viewed on the one hand as a semantic sleight-of-hand, and on the other as a perfectly reasonable solution, fully in accord with the wishes of its members. The union did not want to become involved in the business of running the country, and surely not of ruling it. Even the idea of setting up workers' councils in factories was initially rejected, on the ground that any attempt to give workers a voice in managing the enterprises would eventually be thwarted—as happened to workers' councils which had been set up spontaneously in 1955-56, and which by 1958 were placed firmly under party supervision. Solidarity's strategy was to force the party into undertaking the necessary reforms, but not, under any circumstances, to collaborate with it.

Yet it became increasingly difficult to maintain this position. Putting pressure on the party was a tactic intended to lead to dialogue and compromise; instead it produced conflicts and confrontations. The party evinced little enthusiasm for honoring the provisions of the Gdansk accords. For whatever reasons—ingrained authoritarian habits, the realization that any meaningful changes in the system (such as the decentralization of the economy and of the administrative apparatus) would deprive hundreds of thousands of bureaucrats of their jobs and privileges, and the dire threats from the Soviet Union (which did not intimidate the average Pole, but created alarm and disarray within party ranks)—the party was stymied. It was able neither to crack down nor to make the necessary concessions to an increasingly restive and aggressive population. In the spring of 1981, it seemed as if the party had come to some kind of resolution. Many observers felt that the party was on the verge of major reforms which could lead eventually to recognition of Solidarity as the authentic representative of Polish society, and to deal with it accordingly (see my article, "Poland's Communists Reborn?" TNR, June 6). By the end of the summer, this also proved illusory.

Perhaps it is too much to expect a party which for 35 years ruled by *diktat* and subterfuge thoroughly to revamp itself, and to give up—in fact if not in name—its plainly unviable insistence on playing "the leading

role." In any case, the results of the party's obstructionist tactics were soon clear: in Solidarity, the "radicals" (or "fundamentalists," as they have been dubbed) became more numerous and vociferous. The moderates (which include the intellectual "advisers" and "experts"), who maintained that the way to accommodation and compromise was still open, found themselves criticized by rank-and-file members for their timidity and "lack of true Polish spirit." The economy continued to decline. Shortages of the most elementary staples and ever-lengthening queues contributed to a pervasive climate of anger and impatience. The church retained its "confessional" hold over the bulk of the population, but its calls for moderation and reasonability often went unheeded. Above all, the public mistrust in government reached almost bizarre proportions. Jacek Kuron, the former KOR leader and now adviser to Solidarity, wrote in the Warsaw daily *Sztandar Młodych*: "If the public were given a piece of true information to the effect that the government had laid a golden egg, people would say, first that it is not golden, second that it is not an egg, and third that the Government did not lay but stole it. This is not funny—it is tragic."

BUT FACED with the deepening unrest and with the growth of autonomous organizations bent on producing their own economic and political proposals and even, eventually, on replacing the increasingly moribund administrative structures, Solidarity was compelled to revise its strategy. The union finally had to come to grips with the contradiction between its overall aims and its actual, essentially political, role. It had to define its own concept of "partnership," and to transform itself in word and deed from a pressure group to a movement seeking an active, if not decisive, voice in running the country. By last spring that transformation had in fact taken place. For instance, Solidarity came out strongly not only for self-management in factories, but for a democratic reform of the entire political system. Nonetheless, it still backed away from producing a credible explanation of how it proposed to wield the power without changing the existing system of authority. In June, Stefan Kisielewski, a celebrated journalist, novelist, and critic, who is never averse to outspoken commentary, chided Solidarity for its excessive caution in the pages of its official publication, *Solidarity Weekly*. Any reform of Poland's system, he said, is inevitably "a political reform: You can't get out of politics, no matter how much you publicly declare yourself against it." Similar sentiments have been voiced by other prominent sympathizers of the union.

The remarkable 30,000-word "Program of Solidarity," which was adopted by the Union's Congress in October, addresses this dilemma in explicit terms:

The birth of the mass social movement that is Solidarity has brought about a fundamental change in the situation of the country. . . . It has altered the conditions in which

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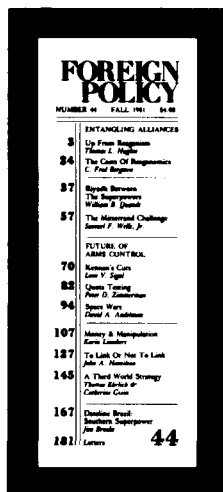
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power is exercised. . . . The authorities should have taken into consideration the will of society and should have acted under its control, in keeping with the principles laid down in the social accords of Gdansk, Szczecin and Jastrzebie.

But more than a year had passed without any progress in this direction. As a result of the government's policies, past and present, "the country has been brought to ruin," and the public is "weary and impatient":

Faced with a national tragedy, Solidarity can no longer confine itself to expectations and to exerting pressure on the authorities to keep the promises embedded in those accords. We are society's sole guarantor. Therefore, our Union has recognized as its basic duty the initiation of all immediate and long-term actions aimed at saving the country from collapse, and society from poverty, despair, and self-destruction. There is no other way of attaining this goal than through democracy and a concerted public effort to rebuild the state and economy.

THE PROGRAM is fascinating on many counts. Its indictment of the system that has ruled Poland since the end of World War II is detailed, direct, and lethal. It was a system "based on unlimited authority of central party and state institutions," which "violated human and civil rights" and practiced "discrimination and economic exploitation." It "monopolized the right to define and express the aspirations of the whole nation," placed a premium on "political obedience instead of . . . independent action," and pursued economic policies which, "ignoring fundamental national interests, have blocked all attempts at reform and squandered huge foreign loans." It is out of the society's revolt against this wretched heritage that "Solidarity was born," and not out of a mere concern for "bread, butter and sausage." It is equally significant that Solidarity refers to itself as "an organization which combines features of a trade union with those of a wide social movement," and that it "represents many social trends and unites people of various outlooks and different political and religious creeds, irrespective of their nationality."

But the program is far more than a statement of general principles. Its vision of the future of Poland—egalitarian, "self-governing," "pluralistic," and "democratic"—is accompanied by a well thought-out plan for economic reforms, which must be subjected to strict "social control" and implemented not by party bureaucrats but by "individuals commanding social and professional respect, placed in directing positions in the economy." The economic system must be radically decentralized, must "link market laws to socialized planning," must introduce "supply and demand mechanisms," and must offer greater incentives to private farming. Enterprises must be run by workers' self-management bodies (i.e., workers' councils) which, with the exception of those connected with the armament industry and a few others, must also be vested with the power to appoint their own directors. The pro-

gram accepts the necessity of "price rises"—indeed, for a complete revision of the existing pricing system—provided they are accompanied by compensatory provisions for the needy, and are "accepted by the Union through a referendum." It urges the government to seek "foreign aid" and to "rejoin the International Monetary Fund." This would, of course, subject the reform to a certain amount of supervision from the "capitalist world"—not an outlandish demand, given Poland's colossal debt to capitalist banks, and the government's desire to obtain new loans.

The proposals for restructuring the country's political institutions are no less drastic and specific. Reflecting Solidarity's aversion to centralization in all its forms, the program urges the creation of "independent and self-governing institutions in all areas of public life." Among some of the concrete proposals, intended to bring about a "self-governing republic" and to be implemented gradually, are "democratic elections to people's councils" (that is, local administrative bodies) and to the Parliament; reforms of the penal system and of the judiciary; and freedom of the press and expression in general. Censorship, says the program, "is an evil which we accept temporarily and out of necessity," but it must not apply at all in the areas of education, history, literature, science, and the arts. (In this respect, the program departs substantially from the new censorship law, passed by the Parliament in July, which, while significantly more liberal than the old one, and while exempting certain publications from government control, still retains preventive censorship in all public media.) The program also clearly upholds Poland's "international alliances" (i.e., membership in the Warsaw Pact). Finally, the program calls upon the authorities to "cooperate with the society" in bringing about a genuine "social contract."

We do not claim . . . that we have a monopoly on truth. We are prepared for an honest and loyal dialogue with the authorities, to seek correct solutions that would best serve the country and would realize the labor and civil interests of the working people. Let this be a contract based on what is national, democratic, and human; based on that which should never divide us.

SOLIDARITY'S program, then, is both a firm affirmation of the union's evolving determination to assume an active role in running the country, and a call to the party to cooperate in a common effort to rescue the country from its catastrophic state. Yet does it guarantee that Solidarity will not challenge the existing machinery of power? Since the program pointedly avoids any reference to the party's "leading role," or for that matter even to "socialism" (though it is clearly permeated with a fundamental libertarian socialist ethos), it is not surprising that the party's initial response was hostile. There can be "no agreement with those who . . . reach out for power," said the party daily, *Trybuna Ludu*, on October 23. But others

disagreed. "Pragmatism," said the daily *Zycie Warszawy* on October 13, "triumphed. . . . The way to an accord has not been closed." And even more pointedly: "The Union stated clearly that it was ready to accept joint responsibility for the country's destiny, along with the risk inherent in this decision. Whoever accepts joint social responsibility also acquires the right to joint decision-making."

THE APPEARANCE of diametrically different responses in the daily press is significant not only because it illustrates the enormous changes that have already taken place in Poland since the summer of 1980, but also because it points to fundamental disagreements within the ruling elite. The election of General Wojciech Jaruzelski as the party's First Secretary was greeted by many Western observers as a sign that the "hardliners" had won, and that the party and the union were heading for an unavoidable collision. Yet the opposite may well be the case. Jaruzelski's personal prestige is still considerable, his opposition to the use of the army as an instrument against striking workers (voiced in 1976 and again in 1980) is well known, and his military uniform, in a country in which the cult of the army has deep historical roots, may well place him in a position to override the objections of his own "fundamentalists," and to make the necessary concessions to Solidarity.

In his recent speech to the Parliament, Jaruzelski coupled his stern request for immediate action against strikes with a conciliatory proposal to set up a "council of national accord" and a "socioeconomic council," both presumably aimed at achieving a broader popular consensus and at meeting Solidarity's demand for "social control" (the word "political" is still taboo) over the government's policies. The latter proposal, in fact, bears a resemblance to the union's proposal for setting up a "Social Council for the National Economy," which the authorities at first rejected out of hand. The extraordinary "summit" between Lech Walesa of Solidarity, Primate Archbishop Jozef Glemp, and Jaruzelski, which followed a week later, suggested that the party may have accepted the fact that only by redefining its own concept of its "leading role," and only by giving Solidarity a genuine role in the decision-making process, will the present crisis ever be resolved. As the editor of *Solidarity Weekly*, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, remarked, the most important thing "was the simple fact that the talks had taken place: this was an element of detente" necessary for more extensive discussions in the future. The fact that the church had decided to throw its enormous authority behind an effort to work out a meaningful "partnership" is also of singular importance.

There is, of course, no assurance that even this momentous step will bring about the necessary change in the Polish political climate. For the party as a whole, Solidarity's challenge may well recall the slogan of the

Polish gentry in the 17th century: "*Rex regnat, sed non gubernat*" ("The King reigns but does not govern"). Hardline elements in particular in the party, and some in Solidarity, may be expected to do their utmost to sabotage it. Yet even if the party accedes to all of Solidarity's demands (which would be unprecedented—but then everything that has happened in Poland these past 15 months has been unprecedented), even if the crisis of confidence in the country's leadership can be assuaged, there is no certainty that the new dispensation will work. Will factories become more productive and efficient if they are managed by their employees? Will the population accept the necessary austerities without a murmur? Will Solidarity's new slogan "control—not power" (as spelled out in a recent issue of the *Weekly*) work out in practice? And, most important, will the desperate economic crisis in which the country finds itself recede?

IT IS HERE that the United States, and the West European governments acting in concert with it, have a role to play. The notion of granting new economic aid to Poland—and by this I mean not merely some food handouts—is not very popular these days, and understandably so. Why should commercial banks, which sunk billions of dollars into Gierek's Poland, only to see them going down the drain without any promise of ever recouping their losses, even consider any new loans? But there is something to be said for the U.S. government taking the lead in this effort—only, of course, on the condition that the Polish authorities honor their promises to Solidarity, and that the necessary political and economic reforms (the exact nature of which are open to negotiation) are put into effect.

It is important that the Reagan Administration show a willingness to consider various alternatives. Many people assume that the leadership of the Soviet Union would never tolerate the kind of foreign "interference" in which the U.S. and Western nations would offer assistance contingent upon the party's implementation of specific economic reforms. But that is as unconvincing as all the arguments we have heard about Moscow's inflexible opposition to a free and independent trade union, or to any liberalization whatever in Eastern Europe. The contention, frequently voiced in some government circles, that "it isn't our business to help a Communist government" is not only patently inconsistent, as shown in the Administration's decision to sell grain to the Soviet Union, but based on a fallacious premise. By doing so, the U.S. would be helping not a repressive government, but a people who have already shown that they will not tolerate any more repression. Finally, the argument that we cannot afford it is pernicious nonsense. Scrapping, say, a few B-1 bombers is hardly a prohibitive price for the prospect of achieving gradual stability and democracy in the heart of Europe.

BOOKS AND THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

A Dinner and A Disaster

Since the Industrial Revolution, the development of Western civilization has been accompanied by resistance to that development. From Luddites to the communes of California, the line of re-

My Dinner with André
(New Yorker Films)

Montenegro
(Atlantic)

sistance twists and turns but is unbroken. Each of us has met the carpenter or market gardener who gave up university teaching or advertising because he hated the values and pressures in his former environment. As forces of scientific and social progress have striven to make life less brutalizing and more pleasurable, a dissenting group has continually struggled against the progress, its members feeling that the price of the advantages was too high in loss of self-defined freedom.

One recent testimony of this struggle is *My Dinner With André*, a two-hour film directed by Louis Malle which consists entirely of conversation at a restaurant table between two men: Wallace Shawn, a New York playwright in his 30s, and André Gregory, somewhat older, a director in the avant-garde theater who made a considerable reputation in the 1960s and early 1970s in New York and elsewhere but who has not lately been active. We go to the dinner with Shawn; he talks with Gregory—who does most of the talking—while they have their meal; then they part and we travel back downtown with Shawn.

Gregory had directed a play of Shawn's called *Our Late Night* (a poor play, I thought) at the Public Theater early in 1975, and they had not seen each other in the five years since. Gregory fills Shawn in on his activities since then, which are extraordinary. Gregory has been in Poland, participating in extra-theatrical group experimentation

with Jerzy Grotowski. (Just last summer in New York, Gregory introduced Grotowski at a large meeting I attended, then served as translator, from the French, while this sort of work was discussed.) He has also been in Tibet and the Sahara and elsewhere. His stories are fascinating, not least because he is a magnetic speaker, with a face like an affable hawk. All his travelings, burrowings, flights, and returns grew out of a search for what he calls "reality"—as good a word as any other to define what he feels as what's missing in modern Western life. I couldn't help thinking of Bunyan's hero who left his wife and children (Gregory has a wife and family) and "ran on, crying, 'Life! life! eternal life!'" I also couldn't help thinking that, unlike Bunyan's hero, Gregory could afford it; apparently lack of money never hampered his traveling and, at the end, he pays the bill in this *luxe* restaurant without a tremor.

Shawn, when he finally gets the chance, tells us that his reaction to much the same stimulus has been quite the reverse (possibly because he has no money): he has pulled in his horns and lives through each day for the good he can get out of it. He loves trying to write every day, trying to pay his bills, sitting at home every night with his female companion, reading Charlton Heston's autobiography, which happens to be his book at the moment; and out of these actions, he has, apparently, built a stockade.

Two hours of this talk, and yet it's rarely dull. First, Malle has directed with no trickery. He has simply shot it all in adequate color, cutting from face to face as necessary. I assume that several cameras were used simultaneously: it's hard to credit that many scenes were repeated for reverse angles. Malle's reticence here is not customary, and it implies a conviction that is not constant in him.

Much of what Gregory has to say is stuff we all have, in one form or an-

other, heard or overheard, perhaps spoken ourselves; but his stories are good as stories, and he always sounds as if he is being translated—that is, even when the material verges on the banal, we feel that there is a richness in the man that is being lost in translation.

Shawn looks like a balding *putto* in an Italian Renaissance painting. His "method" is the exact opposite of Gregory's: he self-deprecates, he doesn't theatricalize. He uses a lot of unfinished gestures, and his statements, even when they are not apologetic, sound so. I call it a "method," but I don't mean that it is fake. Readers who happen to be human beings will understand.

What's astonishing is how fluently and continuously the two men converse. Of course, any gaps and sags have been edited out, but, though a script is credited, I think the term is retroactive. The publicity says that Shawn wrote the script after the two men had taped lengthy previous conversations, nevertheless I can't feel that, in the film, they spoke memorized lines: they seem to extemporize on previously selected topics.

Memorized or extemporized, the two performances, which is what they are,

FILMS WORTH SEEING

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are extraordinary. The men are performing themselves; this is hard if it's not to look like performing, which would then not be one's self. The presence of camera and lights makes it enormously different from sitting in the same place with the same companion and saying perhaps exactly the same things. Anyone who has ever been on a symposium panel or a radio or TV interview knows this. The difference is not only that one is performing but that what one is saying is being recorded, one way or another; and thus it's being given a permanence, an importance, that ordinary conversations would not have.

And this leads to a basic contradiction. The "My" of the title refers to Shawn. Interesting though this film turned out to be, why should anyone have wanted to make a film of his dinner conversation? It's somewhat ridiculous to hear him say, as he goes uptown to meet Gregory, that he's an obscure playwright trying to pay his bills, when he's doing this confession of obscurity as one of the two principals in a film being made by a famous director.

Shawn, the son of the editor of the *New Yorker*, is becoming a New York phenomenon of sorts, whatever his playwriting gifts. A few years ago he did a version of Machiavelli's *Mandragola*, which I left after 20 minutes; then last year he wrote a play called *Marie and Bruce*, produced (like *Mandragola*) at the Public, in which vile language was set early as the norm and within which norm a contemporary marital agony was pretty well dramatized. A few months ago, *The Hotel Play*, a long work of his with a large cast, was produced at LaMama. The play was utterly uninteresting; the cast was astonishing. (And they turned up for a number of performances.) Small parts were played by well-known actors; smaller parts and walk-ons were done by other playwrights, a celebrated young novelist, a *New Yorker* cartoonist-writer, and one of the most successful book editors in New York. And now someone produces a two-hour film about this "obscure" man of relatively small accomplishment. Phenomenal.

What I liked last about *My Dinner with André* is that this account of the flight of two men from the horrors of a deadeningly technologized world available through the technology of film.

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film to be shown here, which was the second he made, was *Love Affair* (TNR, February 17, 1968), a lovely picture (I've used it several times in film courses) with a heterodox but controlled structure and an understanding of vernacular tragedy. Since then, I've seen his earlier picture and three subsequent ones, with disappointment and increasing despair. Labored cleverness has replaced élan, heavy sexual symbolism has smothered erotic understanding, and the satire on Marxism has been dreadful. (He has not been working entirely at home in Yugoslavia.)

Now, after a long delay since his last picture, *Sweet Movie* (1974), he has found backing in Sweden, and has written and directed a picture called *Montenegro*, starring the inferior American actress, Susan Anspach.

An American wife in Stockholm, married to Erland Josephson, with two small children, a woman who is slightly off her rocker because of undefined frustration (itself commonplace and credible enough), runs off to spend a few days in a Stockholm dive run by Yugoslavs, where she grows generally nuttier. When she comes home after her escapade, she is accepted calmly by her husband, as only European husbands can do it—in films. At the end, serving lunch to her family, she passes out fruit. A caption tells us that the fruit is poi-

soned and that the story is based on fact. I suppose that, within all the damp pyrotechnics, what we've been witnessing is a variant of *My Dinner with André*—a person driven mad by the dailiness of modern life.

But Makavejev's varicose virtuosity lames the whole enterprise. Intercut with family scenes at the beginning are shots of monkeys in a zoo, preceded by a false-naïve story about a child asking a monkey why it stays in its cage. Intercut with scenes of sex are shots of fireworks exploding in a night sky—a symbol I hadn't seen for at least three weeks. Grotesque camera angles, fake-enigmatic cutting, all contribute to the tedium.

Anspach's hair is styled better here than ever before; no other comment about her is needed. Josephson, so good with Ingmar Bergman, will apparently do anything for money and is less good when doing it. The film's cardinal sin for me is its waste of that superlative actor Per Oscarsson (who was in *Hunger*), as a successful psychiatrist whose behavior can't even be described as nonsensical. The Swedish and Yugoslav and American actors all speak English, in Stockholm.

If Makavejev could spend seven years looking for a sponsor and then come up only with a film as mannered, as strained for trite angst, as this one, it's difficult to hope further for him.

almost entirely devoted to American experimentation; the Festival d'Automne and Avignon are both underwriting the Mabou Mines. The latest opera of Philip Glass is commissioned not by the doyens of the Met but by Willy Hoffman of the Rotterdam Theater Foundation, while Holland is also responsible for the world premiere of the Glass-Wilson *Einstein on the Beach*.

THE RESPECT Europeans show toward our artists, however, is not extended to our government, whose notorious indifference to the arts is considered infamous and barbaric. The Netherlands has been trying to create an arts festival in 1982 celebrating 200 years of Dutch-American relations; it probably won't happen because we're not contributing our share. The State Department has little interest in cultural exchange, unless it can produce folksy images of happy Americans for the express purpose of making satellite people envious (typical example—*Our Town* in the Soviet Union); to us, artists are useful largely as salesmen for the system. France, by contrast, with a Socialist government in office, is increasing support not for such conservative national monuments as the Comédie Française, but rather for experimental avant-garde groups, like the Théâtre Gerard Philipe in the Marxist suburb of St. Denis, on the implicit assumption that cultural achievements are measured less by embalming the past than exploring the future.

These advances are currently on view at the Théâtre de la Ville, where Patrice Chéreau's extraordinary production of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* is now electrifying Paris. If you were dazzled by the resources of the British theater as displayed in the Royal Shakespeare Company production of *Nicholas Nickleby*, you will find this French achievement absolutely blinding. Here it is not the acting that inspires envy; it is the direction and the decor. The company—Roger Planchon's Théâtre National Populaire—is solid and workmanlike, if a little declamatory in the usual French classical style. But Chéreau, previously celebrated mostly for opera production (particularly his innovative approach to the Ring cycle at Bayreuth), has used these actors to create an entirely engrossing, absolutely novel interpretation of a play which has hitherto eluded even the most imaginative directors.

Peer Gynt lasts six-and-a-half hours

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

Comparing Theatrical Resources

It is unsettling for American theater people to visit Europe; we become much too conscious of our limited resources. It's not that European theater is more

Peer Gynt
Henrik Ibsen

Crossing Niagara
Alonso Alegria

original than ours, but rather that the European state is so lavish in the way it helps to stimulate and realize artistic adventures. What a pang one feels upon seeing a plaque above a box office read-

ing "This theater entirely subsidized by the City of Amsterdam," or "This production largely funded by the Arts Council of Great Britain." Even after cuts, European arts budgets are still fat by contrast with that of the anorexic National Endowment, for the arts abroad are still considered a priority of the national life.

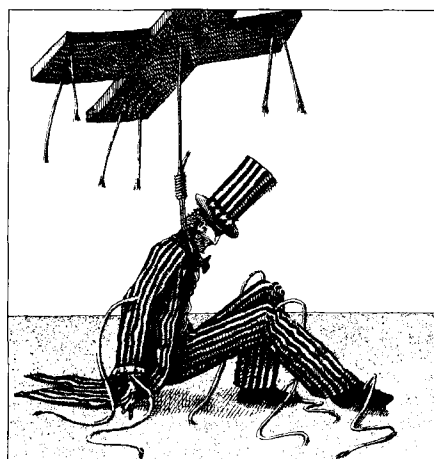
Besides subsidizing its own theaters, Europe helps support ours. Provided they can find their way over, American experimental groups invariably receive more acclaim in foreign cities than at home; there they also receive more funding. The Nancy Festival this year is

and is performed on two successive days; unlike that other theatrical endurance test, *Nicholas Nickleby*, the tickets are reasonably priced at about \$15, thanks to state subsidy. Also thanks to state funds, Chéreau has created—with his brilliant design collaborator, Richard Peduzzi—a mammoth architectural construction on the immense stage of the Théâtre de la Ville which looks like a universe in transition. Chéreau does not believe in subtle set changes. In the dim half-light, where the figures of the actors are further obscured by continuously belching smoke pots, drops are noisily lifted at the same time that others come crashing down to signify a change in scenes. Flats move laterally on stage to the accompaniment of an incessant sound track of music, birds, cries, beast shrieks. If Ibsen suggests the presence of an animal—the Sultan's horse or the Troll King Daughter's pig—Chéreau provides the largest one in Paris for Peer to ride around the stage in triumph. The Great Boyg is suggested by a painted drop in the middle of the stage, portions of which are eerily raised and lowered as if by the flexing of giant knees. Ase's death scene is staged in a oaken coffin, sunk into a stage trap, which Peer rides like a reindeer. When Peer chops wood, he hacks away violently at one of the wooden pillars of the set, sending splinters into the house and filling the audience with fears that the whole scaffolding might fall down.

Chéreau reserves his most spectacular effects for the second part of the program, for Peer's exile and homecoming. When the foreign traders steal Peer's yacht, a miniature sails across the back of the stage and blows up in front of our eyes. Ibsen calls for the statue of Memnon, then the Great Sphinx; Chéreau provides large-scale versions of both objects, complete with pyramids. The madhouse scene—in which Peer is proclaimed Emperor of Self, having entered the one state where the Ego is completely triumphant—is a *Marat-Sade* phantasmagoria featuring a mob of pasty-faced madmen (one with a decaying infant strapped to his back) who imprison their keepers and ransack the environment. When Peer returns to Norway, Chéreau provides the top deck of a ship, complete with rigging, lifeboats, winches, and the illusion of a great storm; when the ship begins to sink, a huge black billowing drop appears (with a bobbing miniaturized craft

on top of it), engulfing Peer as the set is changed *beneath* the simulated waves.

The stage effects, in short, are monumental and breathtaking. What is somewhat less impressive are the stage characterizations. For his Peer, Chéreau has cast a gaunt, intense actor named Gérard Desarthe who accomplishes the age changes so convincingly one believes he is four different people; but whatever his genius for transformation, Desarthe lacks the charm, the whimsicality, the mischievousness, that make Peer such a bright contrast to his vindictive peasant neighbors. Desarthe's Peer Gynt is more existential than Ibsenite—Beckett's Lucky, lank-haired



DRAWING BY MICHAEL GIBBS

and scarecrowlike, in a Norwegian setting. The Troll King, similarly, is more the orator than the sensualist, and the Button Molder looks and acts like one of Ibsen's comfortable pillars of society. Other characterizations are more successful—Solveig, for example, played by Catherine Rétoré with slightly spastic, hollow-eyed intensity, which takes the blight off her saintliness, and the Lean Person (the Devil), equipped with enormously long fingernails which he clips nervously while informing Peer he is destined for the casting ladle.

Yes, the production is a little operatic, and more than a little declamatory, but it accomplishes something that nobody—least of all Ibsen—ever believed possible: a complete, convincing, totally faithful stage rendering of an epic dramatic poem.

Back home again with our two-character, minimal-setting, budget-conscious theater, I believe I can recommend one play that has more up its sleeve than love, marriage, fatal illness, or adultery: Alonso Alegria's *Crossing Niagra*, at the Manhattan Theater Club. Although

based on a real event of 1859, this piece also evokes the magisterial ghost of Henrik Ibsen, for it seems to be a reworking of *The Master Builder*, now equipped with a more affirmative ending. Like the aging master builder Solness, the middle-aged acrobat Blondin is approached by a member of the younger generation and asked to extend his powers at the risk of his life. This time, it is not a young Hilda Wangel who demands that the hero "do the impossible once again," but rather an impressionable young man named Carlo who, since the age of four, has watched Blondin make 21 crossings on a tightrope over Niagara Falls. These performances have grown increasingly commercial and duplicitous—in the most recent, Blondin has fried eight eggs (after announcing 12) while balancing himself aloft on his aerial perch. Carlo has imagined that he once saw Blondin actually suspend himself in midair without the aid of a tightrope (Hilda Wangel had a similar hallucination when she first saw Solness climb a tower), and now he wants him to exceed himself for the sake of his art: "You could fly."

AFTER MUCH hesitation, Blondin agrees. What he proposes is to take Carlo on his shoulders across the entire span of the Falls. Carlo seems to have no sense of danger; he calls the feat a "stroll." But the second act reveals that Carlo is trying to conquer his own shame over a childhood failure of courage. Now it is Blondin who experiences fear—and right in the middle of his aerial walk. Carlo talks Blondin across with a combination of insult, flattery, encouragement, and inspiration. Thirty-five yards from the finish line, the action freezes: the two of them have become an artifact of timeless statuary, "walking together up to the sun."

Crossing Niagra is a small piece, which sometimes seems to dawdle over its minor theme, but it is written with conviction and some poetry, and it is performed, under André Ernotte's direction, by Alvin Epstein as Blondin and Paul McCrane as Carlo in a symbiotic manner that makes acting the equivalent of a double tightrope walk. Santo Loquasto's set moves from bed-sitting room realism into abstract gesture, rather like the acting, and, like the acting, suggests the kind of aerial flights our theater could actually accomplish if we ever had the financial and physical and human resources.

A COMMUNITY PORTRAIT

Neighborhood: A State of Mind

by Linda G. Rich, Joan Clark Netherwood, and Elinor B. Cahn

foreword by Wright Morris

(Johns Hopkins University Press, 147 pp., \$27.50, \$12.95 paper)

On the cover of *Neighborhood: A State of Mind*, four children mug for the camera beneath a clothesline full of underwear. All four look tough and happy and impudent. There is something both humorous and fierce in the musclemen stance that two of them adopt. The underwear hanging over them is riddled with holes, the wall behind them is cracked and scabby, and the row houses in the background have tacked-on porches and rotting windowsills; but this is obviously not a scene of deprivation. On the contrary, you feel a little pang of envy. You wouldn't mind stepping into the picture yourself.

It's a wonderful key-note for a book about East Baltimore. After all, we're talking about an area so resolutely individual that the E in "East" is always capitalized, at least by the local newspapers, as if this were a city in its own right. It's a place so staunch and stubborn that when it was hit by urban blight—absentee landlords, declining population, vandalism, rats, and decay, all the evils that most modern city dwellers have helplessly endured—East Baltimoreans fought back. They organized, they campaigned, they took to the streets with brooms. They won. What better portrait, then, than a picture of four laughing children with their fists raised?

For those of us who live in other parts of the city, a drive through East Baltimore in the summertime is something like attending a play. On marble stoops scrubbed white with special, secret concoctions, families sit in clus-

ters. If you had to generalize, you'd say they're mostly blue-collar, mostly of Italian or East European descent. Each family keeps to its own stoop, as a rule, but maintains some alertness toward the stoops on either side, just in case the neighbors might care to exchange pleasantries.

You pass a little girl in a First Com-

the insider's view of things that motivated Linda Rich to begin her East Baltimore Documentary Photography Project. When she first came to teach photography at the Maryland Institute, she tells us, she was taken to East Baltimore's annual "I Am an American Day" parade—an orgy of flags and marching bands and politicians busily kissing babies. "Never before," she says, "had I encountered an urban community so densely built upon. Yet it appeared so livable, so inviting. . . . These people and their neighborhoods continued to be a part of my thoughts long after the day of the parade."

A year or so later, she began her project with two of her students. The result is a book of photographs revealing nearly every aspect of life in East Baltimore, fleshed out with tape-recorded interviews and introduced with a foreword by Wright Morris.

Wright Morris, it seems to me, writes somewhat askew of the point, explaining East Baltimore in sociological terms and going on and on about Gertrude Stein and how

only *women* could have taken these pictures. I sense he was a bit bewildered by all the brouhaha about an area he seems unfamiliar with. But the photographs are stunning—sharp-edged, filled with light, and thoughtfully composed, real windows upon a fascinating world. And the interviews have the natural richness you'd find in a Studs Terkel book. Listen to Father Lou Esposito, for instance:

Of course, what we have most of are churches and bars. We don't know



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOAN CLARK NETHERWOOD

munion dress, a toddler staggering from lap to lap, a pair of old women giggling behind their fingers. You watch two men in undershirts swilling their beers and laughing, talking about . . . what, exactly? What is it they find to talk about? Oh, there's always that little pang of envy, when you're driving through East Baltimore. East Baltimoreans are insiders, leading their own mysterious lives. And we're the outsiders, just cruising by in our cars.

It must have been partly a longing for

DON SCHAEFER'S TOWN

Five days after the appearance of *Time's* cover paean to the developer James Rouse and Baltimore's renaissance, an English antique expert, also named Rouse, was shot dead in the city after chasing a bicyclist who had grabbed his fiancée's purse. The three youths charged with the murder had nothing to do with the robbery; apparently they were miffed by the English habit, so strange to them, of giving chase to muggers.

It was less a tragedy than an embarrassment to Baltimore's boosters, chief among whom is William Donald Schaefer, Mayor since 1971 and perhaps the nation's most conspicuously successful urban chief executive over the course of a decade during which the old cities of the East and Midwest have continued their 30-year decline. Don Schaefer is allergic to bad news about the city to which he has given his life. So he felt compelled to castigate the bearer of most of that bad news, the *Baltimore Sun*, for publishing a gritty editorial entitled "Murder in Baltimore" in the wake of the slaying of Phillip Rouse. The *Sun's* editorial led with a grim statistic: with half the population of Northern Ireland, which Americans view as the apotheosis of urban anarchy, Baltimore had three times as many murders in 1980. Don Schaefer was not pleased; he is no lover of irony.

Random street violence is a reminder of what Don Schaefer has spent great energy and skill trying to refute: that the great American city is still in trouble. It is a good thing for him and for Baltimore that he is a thin-skinned man who vents his anger easily.

In 1971 Baltimore was in a bad way. White flight, the senility of her industrial plant, and a series of bitter elections fought in graceless reaction to the emergence of black political power had left the old port town feeling futile and inferior.

Don Schaefer's election in the racially acrimonious campaign of 1971 was no harbinger of renaissance. As a member of the City Council he had

only grudgingly accepted the changes rapidly occurring in the Charm City of his youth, with her densely serrated row houses and white marble steps. But surprisingly, this bachelor still living with his mother in a neighborhood now gone completely black chose to marry Baltimore: to love her and cherish her in sickness and in health. Convinced of her latent vitality, he found administrators who would lend substance to his faith, entered into a mutual admiration society with business leaders, and learned how to hustle the feds.

The result has been a congeries of programs often cited as a model for the survival of the American city. Dollar houses, low-interest rehabilitation loans, and creative financing for entrepreneurs making big promises of redevelopment are just a few of the ploys this improbable old coquette of a city has used to recapture attention. It is too soon to tell whether these measures will save Baltimore, and really not much has changed since 1971—except that Don Schaefer's positive thinking has caught on. That quaint blue-collar town you pass through on the way from New York to Washington has a genuine atmosphere of achievement and hope. This is Don Schaefer's real accomplishment, and its symbols are Harborplace, a green-roofed, glassy network of shops and restaurants, and the spanking new aquarium, which together have transformed a graveyard of rotting docks and rickety warehouses into a reason to come downtown.

To a refugee from Boston, Baltimore works better than the other big cities on the East Coast. Half Southern and half Northeastern, she has the air of an unusually diverse and well-equipped small town. She is a city of strong neighborhoods that afford a sense of belonging. City Hall is accessible, responsive, efficient; Don Schaefer is honest and he runs a tight ship. Long the home of an able black middle class, Baltimore is now 60 percent black. The ambitious young black men of West Baltimore are the chief threat to Don Schaefer's hegemony. His canny alliance with the black politicians of East Baltimore, who have always felt inferior to the light-skinned doyens west of Charles Street, has kept the black

community divided. Oddly enough, the tension has been a creative one. To make his city work, Schaefer has had to wheel and deal with blacks; to make the city work for blacks, they have had to deal with him. When the black communities reunite, they will know how to run a city.

You wonder whether they will inherit the East Coast San Francisco that Don Schaefer dreams of or a gussied-up Newark. Schaefer is mainly interested in downtown redevelopment, in the hope that hoteliers, conventioners, and consumers will somehow do for Baltimore what shipbuilders and dockworkers, steel-makers and steelworkers, did in the past. Can the jobs generated by construction projects and by catering to quiche eaters replace the manufacturing activity that built the city's neighborhoods? Baltimore seems committed to a strategy of substituting tourism for industry.

The Baltimore that is really worth saving is the clean, safe, homely neighborhood where ordinary people can raise their children and send them to school. This is the Baltimore that has yet to excite Don Schaefer's imagination. His role model is James Rouse, not Saul Alinsky. The promise of yet another affluent consumer's playground, a downtown Bloomingdale's, won't provide enough jobs to alleviate the chronic unemployment that hits blacks hardest. The well-heeled young homesteaders have improved some blighted neighborhoods and, because of inflated property prices, made it impossible for people of modest means to live in other more stable ones. Reaganomics will make jobs and affordable family housing even harder to find.

Don Schaefer will be Mayor for as long as he wants. The question is, *après* Harborplace, *quoi*? Crime remains the very real bogeyman for those who love and live in cities. And the fear of crime has never been so widespread. It is crime, the facts and the fears of it, and the loss of industry that make you wonder whether Baltimore's comeback is just a remission in the course of an inevitably debilitating illness.

HAL RIEDL

Hal Riedl is a Baltimore writer.

whether the bars came in first and the people started feeling guilty and they built churches, or the churches came in first and the people started feeling guilty and went to the bars.

Or Mary Bready, on what it was like to supervise dances among the rival Polish and Italian teenagers:

We used to check the kids in, as they came in, and we used to check their brass knuckles, quite—I mean this was automatic. You took their coat, their hat, and their brass knuckles as they came in, and when they left you gave them their coat, their hat, and their brass knuckles. . . .

Or this from Estelle Figinski, on buying a house in East Baltimore:

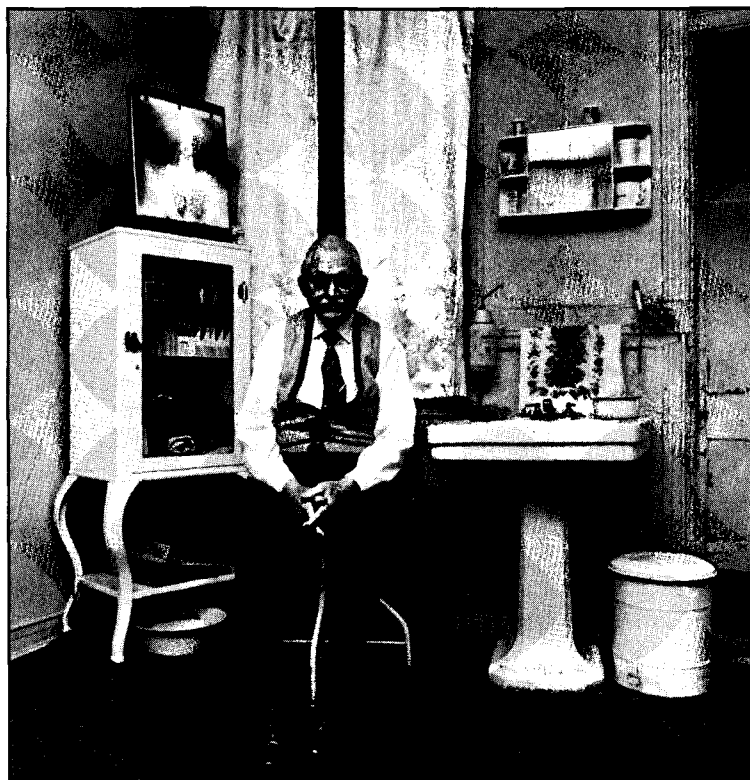
It was terrible. It was a door here and a door here and everything was blocked—you know—boxed in, everything. All the rooms were separate—everything was boxed in. . . . So I never forget it. Fronnie comes in. 'Oh, what junk you bought. What's the matter? Where was your eyes?' I says, 'Where were my eyes? In my head. But I didn't see the house. I bought the street. Don't you understand?'

Well, who wouldn't buy one of these streets, as they appear in this book? They're clean-swept and possessed of a toylike precision, so tidy they're almost funny. ("Trees!" East Baltimoreans are quoted as saying, refusing all the city's planting efforts. "Trees bring birds and birds drop on our cars. . . . Trees mean leaves, and that means more cleaning up.")

Quite logically, the photographs begin with the streets and work inward, as if we were making a real-life visit. The first pictures show vistas of row houses stretching away in the distance, and acres of clotheslines, and completely paved backyards where even the garbage cans are symmetrically arranged. There are exterior views of markets and homes, a woman in curlers and housecoat surveying us from her front door, and one of those decorated windows that so entrance us on our Sunday drives—in this case, a window full of ceramic nuns playing baseball.

Moving in, the book reveals East Balti-

moreans rolling dumplings for a church social, decorating Saint Anthony's statue with dollar bills, attending a meeting of the Polish-American War Mothers. An All Souls' Day procession wends its way through a graveyard, with monks dressed in robes and black leather jackets. And we're shown what even other East Baltimoreans seldom see (for their social contacts generally halt at the stoop)—the interiors of houses with their meticulously decorated parlors, the bookshelf laden with Elvis souvenirs, the Christmas altar set up on an ironing board.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOAN CLARK NETHERWOOD

In a section called "Lives of Work," a stable boss lounges beneath a tangle of harness in a Fells Point livery stable. A doctor sits in his tiny examining room that looks more like a private bathroom, with a flowered towel over the sink and a bottle brush in the toothbrush rack. An intriguingly cluttered, ancient pharmacy with an antique brass cash register startles us by offering Pampers. Two beaming sisters pose among the bride dolls, Kennedy portraits and mismatched glassware of their thrift shop, which is stocked with castoffs from members of their family.

A few pictures have the eerie grotesqueness of a Diane Arbus photo. There's the little girl in a bikini and sunglasses, modeling in a store window for

a fund-raising fashion show. There's the group of elaborately coiffed ladies in the beauty parlor, sitting around a statue of a naked Roman goddess with flowing tresses.

But it doesn't seem to be an intentional grotesqueness, of the sort that's caused by a condescending photographer. In fact, it's clear that the photographers have approached their subjects with genuine respect. They made their contacts through the neighborhood churches, as patiently and delicately as anthropologists. During the course of the project, they exhibited their photos

in the neighborhoods where the photos were taken, and they gave copies to the subjects.

And almost always, something in the pictures themselves suggests that the East Baltimoreans were allowed to appear as they *asked* to appear—surrounded (as in the case of one elderly lady) by their favorite dolls, or showing off their chandelier-draped bed or their dining room with its diamond-shaped mirrors and Roman warrior bronzes. Even the captions reflect this. ("Matilda is famous for her whiskey sours and her chocolate chip cookies.") It's a good tactic; for what tells more about someone than how he hopes to be seen?

Trustful and generous, radiating a firm belief

that things will work out in the end, these people gaze steadily into the camera's eye—the strong-faced, amused-looking Marta Nadozirny in her long striped woolen scarf, the unnamed black woman waiting with dignity beneath an umbrella on a summer afternoon, the serenely beautiful Solomon Faiman, 85 years old, clasping his hands like a child in the center of his new-and-used clothing store. Their photographs are a celebration not only of a geographical area, but also of a certain quality in the human spirit—a fierce independence and resiliency that should make all of us, whether outsiders or insiders, proud to know them.

ANNE TYLER

REAGANISM WITH A HUMAN FACE

The Road From Here: Liberalism and Realities in the 1980s by Paul Tsongas

(Knopf, 280 pp., \$12.95)

In June of 1980, Senator Paul Tsongas delivered his now-famous speech before the Americans for Democratic Action, warning that the liberal movement was in danger of being "reduced to an interesting topic for Ph.D.-writing historians," and calling for "a new liberalism." Four months later, when Tsongas's prediction seemed to be coming true, he gave a long interview to then-*Washington Post* reporter Nicholas Lemann, who attempted to discover just what the "new liberalism" might entail. Near the end of the interview, in which Tsongas opposed public works jobs programs while supporting oil price decontrol and business tax cuts, Lemann said pointedly: "You've just come out for a whole series of ways to help big business. You have in the past come out for nuclear power. How can you still call yourself a liberal? What's liberal about you?"

"I consider myself a liberal on what would be termed social values," Tsongas responded. "On issues like abortion, women's rights, gay rights, busing, affirmative action, that kind of thing. I'm opposed to capital punishment. I'm not the raw material of the Moral Majority."

What a disappointing answer that was. Were these hoary "social values"—many of them almost "lifestyle" issues—really all that separated Tsongas's "new liberals" from their Republican colleagues? Didn't Tsongas have anything original to say about the fundamental issues of politics—who gets what, and how they get it, or how our nation should act in the world? George Orwell had condemned the Socialists of his day as "fruit-juice drinkers" and "sandal-wearers" who allowed their fringe causes to detract from the basic economic battle. Tsongas seemed to be saying that the fringe issues were all there was left to fight about—a losing fight at that, given the prospects of riding into office on a wave of popular support for busing, affirmative action, and homosexuality.

Tsongas has a better answer now, having written the first of what will surely be many self-conscious attempts over the next few years to "redefine liberalism." It is a serious piece of work,

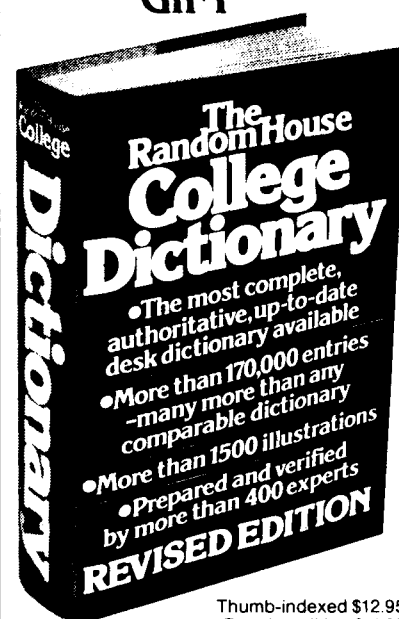
going well beyond the usual ghostwritten pap of senatorial volumes, and it avoids the easy flailing of the Reverend Falwell for sober, thoughtful chapters on meaty topics like energy, the economy, the Soviet threat, and the environment. As a neoliberal manifesto, Tsongas's case for what he calls "compassionate realism" provides no ideological breakthroughs, nor do all of his chapters deliver much that is "new" at all. But Tsongas says enough that needs saying to make you thankful he made the effort. One might even be tempted to call this "a book that should be read by every concerned American," were it not so clearly the sort of book designed to be reviewed and discussed at parties rather than actually read.

Those who do attempt to actually read this book will discover that the benefit of an unfiltered glimpse into Tsongas's mind is not without its aesthetic penalties. No competent ghostwriter would pen a sentence like this one: "Compassionate realism requires a clear-eyed analysis of the world welfare." Other passages read like Tsongas found them in a bad fortune cookie. (Describing Russian leaders' grain problems: "As relentlessly as a mosquito in the night, you are plagued by poor harvests.") Bereft of a sense of cliché or irony, Tsongas tortures his metaphors until even the most concerned American is likely to concede defeat and pick up his copy of *Foreign Affairs* for a little literary relief. "Square pegs are worthless when you have round holes," Tsongas argues at one point,

but if the holes evolve into squares over time, they will fit. . . . In 1980, some liberal round pegs no longer fit into the square realities of our world, and the conservative square pegs prevailed. I believe fervently that the transformation continues unabated. As we journey into the 1980s and 1990s, the need will be for oval pegs. . . .

But there are rewards for perseverance. Tsongas's perspective, as you would expect, is that of a politician rather than a pointy-head—which is fine, because it is on the political level where he is most heretical. His opening

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chapter describing his "road to reassessment" amply dramatizes the extent to which the telling academic attacks on the New Deal state—from the left in the 1960s, and the right in the 1970s—failed to penetrate down to the campaign level, where a sort of comic-book version of liberalism survived by concerning itself almost exclusively with the pacification of the various liberal "constituencies."

IT SEEMS incredible, for example, that in 1979 it would still take an act of political courage for a liberal to oppose the more outrageous positions of American unions. (Remember *On the Waterfront*?) But it did take courage during the Chrysler bailout debate two years ago, when it became clear to Tsongas that the United Auto Workers might prefer to see Chrysler go under than accept the idea that wages might not march ever upward. Tsongas proposed forcing Chrysler workers to accept wage concessions (in exchange for stock options) as a condition of federal loan guarantees, and was greeted with shocked hostility by the U.A.W. and the Carter Administration (as well as the Chrysler Corporation itself). You'd think liberals would concede the possibility that some union members might have to lower their living standards if, say, they made cars so poorly that no one would buy them. In practice, liberal orthodoxy had come to require bleeding the average taxpayer to subsidize raises for a bankrupt company's highly paid unproductive workers.

The Chrysler debate "began the cutting of an umbilical cord," Tsongas says. Other epiphanies followed. Tsongas provoked the automatic opposition of the environmental lobby when he concluded that, despite the safety risk, there was no alternative to continued reliance on nuclear power. He angered consumerists (whose liberalism had been reduced to opposition to anything that raised prices) by supporting Jimmy Carter's attempts to impose a gasoline tax. Tsongas's accounts of the degeneracy of conventional liberalism are telling—so telling that you wonder whether without the compelling distractions of Vietnam and Watergate the current "crisis" of liberalism wouldn't have come 20 years earlier, in response to the "realities of the 60s," say, rather than the "realities of the 80s."

Once past Tsongas's account of his

enlightenment, readers would do well to skip the next chapter, a lengthy analysis of our energy problems. Tsongas calls energy "The First Reality," in keeping with his overall argument that liberal "ideology" ignores eight "realities" that "we will have to face before the turn of the century." Unfortunately, most of Tsongas's "reality" on the energy issue seems to have been gleaned from discredited Carter Energy Department briefing papers. Tsongas is thoroughly spooked by the fact that "oil is a finite, diminishing resource." ("These six words tell us almost everything.") He quickly goes Carter one better and declares that, rather than the "moral equivalent" of war, "the energy crisis is war." The near-hysterical discussion that follows underestimates the role of market prices in steering the "transition" away from oil, and totally ignores the growing evidence of abundant natural gas supplies.

You will think better of Tsongas if you first read what he has to say about foreign policy and the economy. These chapters present, in Tsongas's sincere, plodding fashion, many of what might be the building blocks of a genuine "new liberalism."

TSONGAS'S view of the Soviets, for example, features an unliberal lack of embarrassment about discussing Russian aggressiveness. "Most Americans view the Soviet Union as a threat to our collective survival," Tsongas asserts. "They are basically correct." Nevertheless, he argues effectively that "attempting to achieve superiority is madness." Instead he urges that we regard the Soviet Union as a "cornered bear" to be deterred but not provoked into an act of military desperation. SALT remains firmly embedded in Tsongas's platform, but there are two appealing new planks: a healthy resentment of "the omnipresent instinct of American allies . . . to avoid carrying their share of the mutual defense burden," and an awareness that buying "more and bigger of the same" weapons will help our defense industry more than our defense. (Tsongas's fellow neoliberal, Senator Gary Hart, remains the most sophisticated advocate of the latter position.)

Tsongas's companion chapter on the "Third World" contains less that is fresh, although it easily ranks as the book's most readable section because Tsongas, a former Peace Corps volun-

teer in Ethiopia, is able to use anecdotes and real-world examples instead of strained metaphors. Tsongas vigorously restates the traditional liberal faith that pursuit of "American values" is our best weapon against Soviet influence. Alas, the Senator soon slides into Carterism, praising as a "major theoretical breakthrough" Zbigniew Brzezinski's "removal of the centrality of the East-West struggle from Third World considerations"—this just after Tsongas had convinced you that pursuit of principle was desirable, in part, as the way to win the "East-West struggle."

You don't really catch a solid glimpse of a New Liberalism worthy of capitalization until Tsongas's "Third Reality," the economy. Tsongas calls for greater incentives to save and invest—who doesn't?—but goes beyond stumping for refundable investment tax credits and tax-deferred I.R.A.'s to criticize the most basic attitudes of American business and labor. A modified "Japan, Inc." strategy—rapidly becoming the preferred Democratic counter to Reaganite free-marketing—underlies Tsongas's approach.

The American manager, Tsongas charges, "bound by immediate considerations of dividends and annual reports, and the likelihood that he will hold his current position for only a few years," is obsessed with short-term profits at the expense of long-term economic health. At the same time, American unions have been unconcerned about productivity, quality control, or absenteeism, a negligence Tsongas notes is reinforced by the realities of union politics. Since laid-off workers often don't vote or even have the right to vote, "the focus [of union leaders] tends to be not on keeping the greatest number of people employed, but rather on keeping those who are employed happy."

WHAT IS needed, Tsongas argues, is a "new unionism"—"tougher, leaner, more flexible, more innovative, concerned about efficiency and productivity and intolerant of featherbedding." He supports a broader labor role in management as a means of encouraging this shift in attitude. Meanwhile, correcting the short time-horizon of managers becomes the job of government—through a nonadversarial form of regulation, through government investment in research and education, through expenditures to shore

up decaying urban "infrastructures."

Tsongas seems close to pay dirt here. His polemic resists the temptation of liberals to appease unions and Northeastern mayors, while avoiding the equivalent Reaganite appeasement of the Fortune 500. Instead, his diagnosis suggests a variety of major structural reforms that might be expected to appeal to the average American concerned about his country's industrial malaise. At the same time, Tsongas (unlike, for example, Hart) manages to remain skeptical of some of the more questionable variations of the Japan, Inc., theme—such as the idea that a "post-industrial" America can somehow do without an industrial base altogether.

The remainder of Tsongas's book is less exciting. A thorough discussion of various environmental crises—carbon dioxide buildup, acid rain, nuclear wastes—demonstrates appropriate concern, but little by way of innovative solutions. (Sample: "Clearly, the CO₂ issue must be raised in international forums and be a priority item of both scientific research and intergovernmental cooperation.") A quirky chapter on international trade argues eloquently for export subsidies, but reads as if large sections could have been drafted by a lobbyist from the Bechtel corporation. (Why, for example, must subsidization of exports take the form of a huge tax break for American employees overseas?) Inflation ("The Eighth Reality") comes last, to emphasize that it "is the effect of failure in other areas, not their cause"—a formulation that also allows Tsongas to avoid the sticky question of whether or not to have an incomes policy.

MOST OF what Tsongas says surely deserves applause, however. He has freed his mind from the grip of the liberal and conservative "constituencies." He can condemn American managers, call for a reduction in unemployment compensation, or suggest abolishing consumer interest deductions without worrying about what the Business Roundtable, the A.F.L.-C.I.O., or the Consumer Federation of America might say.

But if you come away from Tsongas's book with a deep respect for his honesty and courage, I think you also leave vaguely unsatisfied. While Barney Frank, the liberal Massachusetts Congressman, was wildly wrong when he said that Tsongas's "redefinition" is "all

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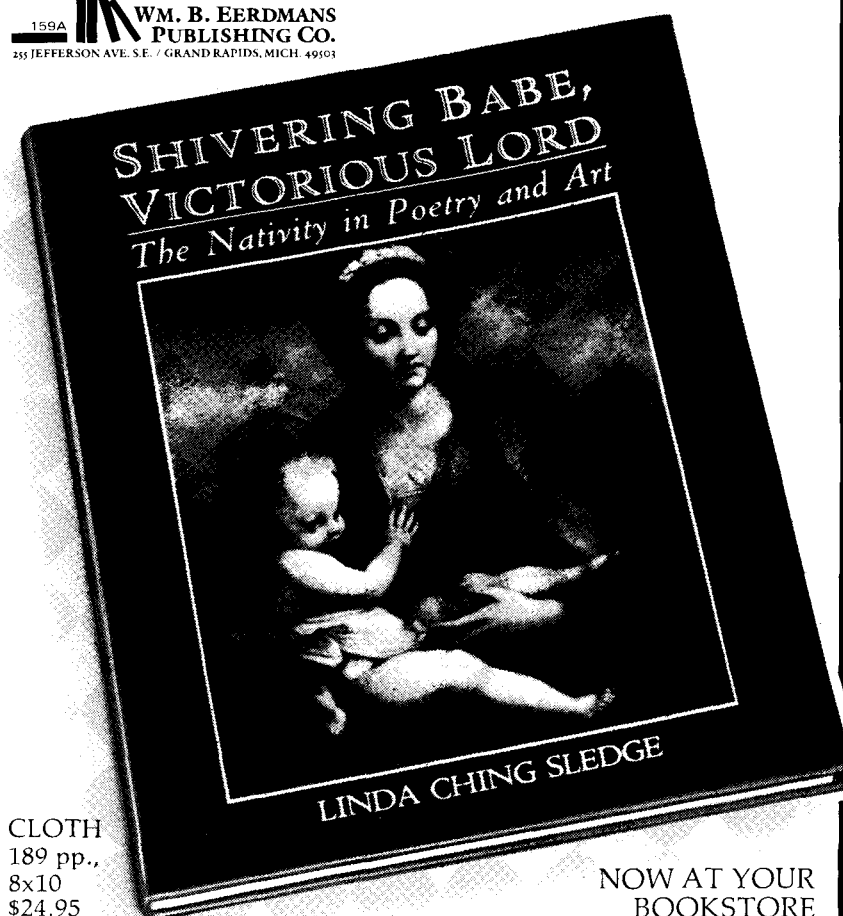
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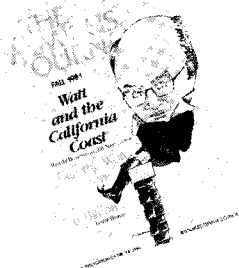
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smoke and mirrors," there is the sense that if Tsongas represents the liberalism of the 1980s we're not in for a very exciting decade. It's the same feeling I got interviewing Tsongas's neoliberal rival, Senator Hart. In the cycle of political hype, this may seem the time to welcome these political figures, overlooking their shortcomings in order to support their laudable enterprise. But it seems undeniable that the neoliberal movement so far has failed to live up to its advance billing.

Part of the problem is the tendency of Democrats like Tsongas, Hart, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan to criticize the current Administration for cutting back on potentially useful programs—Energy Department programs to speed conservation or solar power, industrial revenue bonds, or university research grants, for example—without the questioning that one would expect from neoliberals about whether these programs currently work. Another part of the problem is the extent to which the Democratic senators seem trapped within traditional liberal sources of ideas and expertise, be they Geneva conferences on the "greenhouse effect" or Carter's estimates of natural gas supplies. Some respectable Foggy Bottom type, for example, has convinced Tsongas that the "staggering" foreign debt of Poland poses an insoluble "dilemma" for the Russians, when in fact the staggering Comecon debt gives the Eastern bloc blackmail power over the Western banks—and economies—that will be caught holding the bag if the Communists default.

ALARGER SOURCE of disappointment is the blandness of Tsongas's rhetoric. Even his more exciting points are often buried beneath layers of Cyrus Vance-style moderation:

What we need is less rhetoric and more common sense. Fewer pendulum swings and more steady courses. . . . There must be a broad-based international program strongly urged upon all nations. . . . We should resolve to be relevant to the great issues.

Tsongas's final words are a stirring "Let the debate continue."

But the largest problem, I think, has to do with some of the sentiments behind Tsongas's words—in particular, the two workhorses of his vocabulary, "realism" and "compassion."

Let's start with realism. Having been led astray once by the ideologues of his

own party, Tsongas clearly wants no more truck with their kind. As he puts it in his conclusion, "I have tried to show that there are certain realities facing America, and that they will prevail over dogma, whether of the liberal or conservative variety." In Tsongas's world, reality is forever in conflict with idealism. His slogan is "forget slogans." Liberals simply ran into trouble when, inevitably, their "dogma" didn't fit the "realities" of declining oil supplies, falling productivity, Soviet aggression, or double-digit inflation.

The most important aspect of these "realities," for Tsongas, seems to be their intricacy. "[T]he realities are very complex," he says of the energy problem in a typical passage. "They won't fit on a bumper sticker." Tsongas repeatedly contrasts these complex realities with the "ideological simplicities" of Reagan. His faith is that the "simplistic conservative notions that are insensitive to the realities of the 1980s and 1990s will falter," at which point the public will be ready for a more complicated pragmatism.

THE UNDERLYING admission is that Tsongas's neoliberalism cannot generate the sort of strong moral sentiments that might compete directly with Reaganism. "There's no way what I'm saying can possibly win votes head-to-head with Republican simplicities," Tsongas told Lemann. "There will come a time when the Republican simplicities have been tried and found wanting. . . . [A]t that point you have something to sell. . . ."

I'm not so sure. Jimmy Carter already tried to win an election posing as the candidate of complexity, of tough choices. Did the voters reject him simply because he was incompetent and Reagan's simplicities hadn't been tried—or rather because they accurately perceived that a self-congratulatory pragmatism usually masks an inner moral confusion?

To be sure, Tsongas has a point. Republican as well as Democratic ideology must adapt to the reality of acid rain crossing state and international boundaries. ("If a conservative is a liberal who just got mugged," Tsongas quips, "an activist is a conservative who just found out his drinking water is contaminated.") But Tsongas is so wary of ideological rigidity that he doesn't recognize a stirring ideal when he sees one. For example, he praises schemes in which

workers share in a firm's management and profits—an idea he himself advanced during the Chrysler debate. Surely part of the appeal of these schemes is the more democratic distribution of power, rewards—and risks—they promise. Tsongas sees only how his practical stock-ownership plan was opposed by the unions “in the name of ideology”—not that it might provide the germ of a new, more appealing ideology. Why not expand upon the *rightness* of the employee ownership idea, as well as the fact that it seems to work? Tsongas is capable of arguing that principle and pragmatism “coincide” when America confronts the third world. Why not when it confronts itself?

“Ideology,” after all, is not just simplistic rhetoric. It is our attempt to build a principled moral basis for our actions, in a way that will equip us to face not only the “realities” we know about, but the next set of problems that will come along—which is why lasting political movements are built around ideologies rather than realism. At some level Tsongas knows this, and he attempts to fill the void with frequent references to his sense of “compassion.”

TSONGAS is hardly the only 1981 liberal who, having conceded to the conservatives the general practical efficacy of the free market, has seized upon “compassion” as the quality that saves him from being David Stockman. Liberals like efficiency and productivity too, the argument goes, but they don't like sweatshops, or toxic wastes, or schoolchildren going without hot lunches. “Free market forces softened by compassion” is how Tsongas sums up his economic philosophy.

Tsongas argues that his liberal compassion works its effect within the “frame of reference for action” provided by his realism. The example he offers is oil price decontrol, which he sees as a necessary adjustment to reality. But while he “must accept the reality of decontrol,” Tsongas writes, “the liberal must argue for shock absorbers to cushion the impact on low- and middle-income citizens.”

Conservatives decontrol; liberals decontrol and send checks. Tsongas accepts the basic inequality generated by the marketplace (the existence of “low- and middle-income citizens”), but then for a vaguely articulated reason somehow decides to “cushion” the market's “impact” in a single instance. This is not

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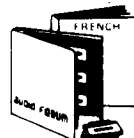
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an ideology, because Tsongas provides no principled connection between his abstract compassionate impulses and the specific actions he favors.

There are other, deeper problems with installing "compassion" as the talismanic liberal virtue. "Compassion" carries a disturbing implication of charity, of dependence on the part of those on the receiving end of the sentiment. Conservatives (and radicals) have a point when they stress that liberal welfare programs sap human dignity; making "compassion" the guiding principle of those programs maximizes the force of

the antipaternalist argument. And compassion, as a form of altruism, has built-in limits. If citizens believe that the welfare state is a sort of institutionalized charity drive, they will naturally cut it back when they feel they have nothing left over to donate—as Tsongas himself acknowledges. ("Liberalism, the vehicle that carries generosity and compassion into the public arena, needs a healthy economy. . . . If the economy is expanding, we can open our hearts to the aspirations of others. . . .") Finally, the parading of "generosity and compassion" carries a pretension to moral superiority

no less palpable in the typical liberal defense of the school lunch program than at one of Nancy Reagan's charity balls.

When I was a college student in the 1960s, the campus radicals told us we should make a revolution out of self-interest, not altruism. Reading Tsongas, I could see what they meant. A lasting neoliberal movement, like a revolution, is more likely to arise out of self-concern. Instead of wearing their compassion on their sleeves, let the neoliberals defend school lunch programs because they don't want to take the chance that *their* children will go hungry; let them care for the aged because they will be aged themselves; let them support job programs because they don't want to take the risk of being without a job, because they don't want to be robbed by an unemployed teenager, because a full employment economy will enable them to live better. At the very least, let them support liberal government because they have a clear vision of the sort of society

that *they* would like to live in.

Reagan has such a vision, however flawed, in the Norman Rockwell view of an enterprising, generous businessmen's society. Tsongas offers nothing comparably compelling. In his abstract, guileless fashion, he says simply that "the trick is to keep the reins loose enough to allow people's strivings to better their lot, but to have the reins prepared to pull back if that advancement comes at the cost of someone's undue exploitation."

To take their politics out of the vague realm of charitable urges, neoliberals would seem desperately to need some explicit concept of "just deserts" to tell them when "exploitation" is "undue exploitation"—and to compete with the Republican "it's mine" morality. Maybe that doctrine would take off from a principle of democratic, universal material rights; maybe it would have a slogan like "equal pay for equal effort." It might simply attempt to undo the perversity of a market that pays high salaries for the nicest jobs—attacking credential-conscious job hierarchies themselves rather than the distribution of wealth they produce. Whatever the formulation, it's bound to be more inspiring than Tsongas's balancing of "incentives" and "compassion" at "acceptable levels relative to one another."

What else might a full-blown neoliberal *ideology* include? This is certainly not an easy question—but once we decide, unlike Tsongas, that it's the important one, there seem some obvious places to start. The logical counterpoint to the conservative celebration of the market, for example, is the celebration of the communal side of government enterprise, which our President would reserve almost exclusively for war and the preparation for war—and which Tsongas reserves for his "war" of "transition" from fossil fuels. But other Democrats, such as Moynihan, have shown a willingness to seize upon the virtues of government activism with a Rooseveltian fervor that is missing from Tsongas's pragmatic complexities.

The point is not simply that collective action can correct defects in the market—curing "short time horizons," purchasing "collective goods," or compensating for "social costs" or "externalities" that economists tell us the market doesn't take into account. In our nation, government activism also has appeal precisely because it would carve out a sphere of life where the principles of

JITTERS

Surely, not the first am I to nervous
thus in a hot parking lot—
ticketed or not—my head
hurting from the sun, from frets
watering my forehead, nose and armpits.
So long a search to find a single spot!

Three days ago in Central Square
great clouds of steam gushed
from the hood, a bilious green
fluid flooded the tar; the car's
repaired but not the frayed
splayed endings of my nerves.

Last night I dreamed my spirit-guide,
a young man in a t-shirt labelled
CIRCUMSTANCE, was pilfering, downstairs
in my residence, a few pitiful knick-
knacks with the aid of a plastic sack.
So! I am the victim of Circumstance!

No. I will not accept this excuse
offered from me to me, a white
narcissus in a grubby hand. Do I not
possess the silver key that slides
into the ignition slot? Who turns
the wheel? Who starts? Who stops?

Leaning against my declining vehicle
I practice deep-breathing, a technique
revealed by a yogi whose mustache
resembles the one Peter Sellers glued on
as a sleuth in *The Pink Panther*. I try
to find the still, null center of myself

around which insects whirr: leafhoppers,
fritillaries and other six-legged creatures—
rasped, ridged, hairy, smooth, pink, green,
spotted and brown—who wear their bones
outside of their bodies, their little lives
designed to chase intoxicating blooms.

PHYLLIS JANOWITZ

the marketplace do not govern, but are replaced by the principle of equality of citizenship, and by the nonmaterial "goods" of free expression and democratic self-governance.

The same democratic virtues might be extended to the private, market sector, through the schemes of worker ownership and self-management that Tsongas himself suggests. This is the best idea left on the left. The more ambitious versions of these plans might significantly alter the distribution of income at its source—at the "means of production," if you will—instead of through discrete post hoc adjustments like food subsidies, progressive tax cuts, or energy "impact" checks.

Even in the public sector, there seems to be room to apply a democratic ideology with considerably more vigor. Tsongas complains repeatedly about the "unresponsive bureaucracy" that gives liberal activism a bad name. But he regards the current combination of official sloth, self-service, and perversity as inevitable, resigning himself to a zero-sum dialectic of free-market excess and bureaucratic overreaction—what he calls "the unending cycle of abuse-anger-laws-regulations-bureaucracy."

Why isn't the antidote to "unresponsive bureaucracy" also democracy? If the regulators overreact, maybe that is because so many of them are "independent" tenured officials like Paul Volcker, unaccountable to the voters except by the most indirect mechanisms conceivable. If the bureaucracy is inefficient, maybe that is partly because 99 percent of our bureaucrats are civil servants, practically unfirable, who have little stake in the success of the party in power.

This state of affairs is not inevitable. It is itself an overreaction to the perceived abuses of partisan government, fueled by the traditional Progressive faith in "neutral" expertise. By restoring a modicum of patronage hiring, we might give more bureaucrats a political incentive to make their organization work that parallels the economic incentives that prevail in the marketplace. Giving elected politicians clear authority over regulations would make them clearly accountable to the voters for any self-aggrandizing "overreaction" (or underreaction).

Re-democratizing the government could be a great neoliberal crusade ("democracy" will even fit on a bumper

sticker), but it is one that the current crop of neoliberals, who seem to share the old faith in expertise, shows no interest in undertaking. But politicians who, like the new liberals, claim to support government activism while deploring the government seem obliged to advocate *some* systemic reform. Just as a recognition of warring class interests in the marketplace informed traditional left activism, so a recognition of warring interests within the state should inform neoliberalism. No one knows better than Senator Hart, for example, how huge defense expenditures on disastrous weapons can be the product not of mere misjudgment but of the concrete interservice rivalries built into the Pentagon's absurd institutional structure. Why not make a unified military command a plank in the neoliberal platform? Additional initiatives might attack other obvious institutional defects—weakening or eliminating the congressional committee system, for example, to break the power of special interest "iron triangles" over the public fisc. No one said neoliberals had to be moderates.

Finally, neoliberals might make a few appropriate concessions to conservative

morality. Defense (where, as Hart points out, liberals have traditionally insisted that "less is better") and crime are two obvious areas ripe for apostasy. Another might be welfare. The current debate over income maintenance tends to be between moralists and technocrats, with the liberals on the side of the technocrats. The antiwelfare moralists like Reagan and Jesse Helms, for all their lack of "compassion," are spokesmen for a powerful, stern ethic: people should not be paid by the taxpayers if they could work for a living. The traditional liberal response has been either a flabby reference to the need for generosity, or a retreat behind the "complex realities" of the problem: that most welfare recipients are unable to work, that ferreting out those who are able would just take more bureaucracy. Thus, even those Democrats—like Hart and former Health, Education and Welfare Secretary Joseph Califano—who support sweeping reform of the welfare system tend to endorse some guaranteed annual income scheme that would send out checks, no questions asked, while relying on a work-incentive formula to discourage freeloading.

Instead, why not admit that the con-

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servative moralists have a point, renounce the guaranteed income approach—but use the conservative work ethic as the basis for an ambitious and useful public works program that fulfills the traditional liberal goal of a guaranteed *job*? Indeed, once a guaranteed-job program for the able and a welfare system for the disabled was in place—and once existing rigid job hierarchies had been compressed through competing worker-management schemes—neoliberals might even be able to stop fretting about the resulting distribution of income, avoiding the urge to create piecemeal redistributionist programs.

In the end, Tsongas has not “redefined” liberal ideology so much as abandoned ideology altogether, replacing it with a bland futurism. He seeks to anticipate and manage the “realities of the 1980s” more skillfully and humanely than the Republicans. But if all we can expect from the left is better crisis-management (“with cost-benefit and

risk-benefit analyses doggedly applied”) then not only liberalism but politics itself begins to look less and less important.

“The greatest danger to the Democrats,” Tsongas told Lemann at the very end of his interview, “is a rational Ronald Reagan. . . . If Ronald Reagan turned out to be capable of stripping away his ideology he could be the new F.D.R., because it would work and there would be no reason to turn to the Democrats.” Those who read *The Road From Here* will not miss the disturbing implication: that, for all of Tsongas’s courage and “compassion,” there would not be much difference between a rational Ronald Reagan and the Democrats as Tsongas would remake them.

ROBERT M. KAUS

Robert M. Kaus is a senior editor of the *American Lawyer* magazine and a contributing editor of the *Washington Monthly*.

to Williams the embattled partisan, fighting literary wars with poems and stories, and even fighting a few medical skirmishes on the side. (Unlike so many in his medical profession, he spoke up loud and clear when he came upon child abuse or malpractice among physicians.)

Williams’s son, William Eric Williams, also a doctor, referred to his father’s “colossal, uphill solo battle”—a battle, Mariani tells us, “to remake American poetry for a wider audience.” Whittemore was getting at the same point when he titled a chapter of his book “The Revolution (in a Still Place).” Williams sought images that would disturb the mind’s sleepy compliance with the tireless conformity of everyday speech. He also was a morally earnest man, with deep attachment to the New Jersey working-class families he treated as a physician for about half a century. Their everyday speech inspired him, but true to his mother’s intensely mystical nature, he fancied the resulting energy as a gift, and himself as a medium of sorts: the beneficiary of a proletarian “them,” which, however, was not a mere abstraction to a general practitioner who made a rather poor living because so many of his patients had no money to pay him for his good care. His obligation was to return the favor—celebrate the largely unacknowledged beauty and dignity of a given world, while also taking note of its tawdry aspects.

Williams criticized no one more harshly than himself. “How strange you are, you idiot!” he says to himself in Book One of *Paterson*. And the long letter which terminates the second book of *Paterson* is in the Augustinian tradition of self-scrutiny: “You’ve never had to live, Dr. P.—not in any of the by-ways and dark underground passages where life so often has to be tested. The very circumstances of your birth and social background provided you with an escape from life in the raw.” Yet he was not daunted by such a fate. He forsook the possibility of a plush Manhattan practice for the tenements of northern New Jersey, and he was willing to take big risks with words and images:

A delirium of solutions, forthwith, forces him into backstreets, to begin again:
up hollow stairs amid acrid smells
to obscene rendezvous. And there he finds
a festering sweetness of red lollipops—
and a yelping dog:
Come YEAH, Chichi! Or a great belly

DOCTOR AND POET

William Carlos Williams: A New World Naked

by Paul Mariani

(McGraw-Hill, 912 pp., \$22.95)

The W. C. Williams bookshelf steadily widens: an outpouring of articles and doctoral theses; at least a dozen book-length critical considerations; the valuable biannual *William Carlos Williams Review*; and now a second, solid biography. For much of his life, though, Williams went unnoticed. When, in his 50s, he did begin to attract attention, it was often of a negative kind—outraged or patronizing glances from critics who judged him crass, provincial. Nor did he work hard at ingratiating himself with important literary people. He shunned the academic centers, where more and more of those people, in this century, have found comfortable homes. He was quick, sometimes too quick, with the cranky or truculent broadside directed at a book reviewer, a professor, an editor, a particular poet. On the other hand, he could be wonderfully kind and generous to young writers, usually men and women who were going, as he put it, “against the grain,” as he did. Hence

his advocacy of them earned him only further disapproval in certain quarters. Like James Agee, he won the Pulitzer Prize posthumously—but he died half a year short of 80, not at 45.

Williams lived a dramatic, hectic life, an ideal one for a conscientious biographer. Reed Whittemore’s account (1975) offered a wry and wide-eyed poet commenting in a relaxed fashion on another poet. Whittemore obviously liked Williams, but as a biographer he wanted and achieved an ironic distance: a narrative calm that treats of a constant turbulence. In contrast, Paul Mariani’s new biography, larger and more detailed than Whittemore’s, is the work of a teacher who acknowledges that he has come to his subject after long familiarity with the academic tradition Williams fought so long and hard. Yet Mariani seems to have forsaken some of the loyalty he once had to that tradition. His book is far less detached than Whittemore’s, far closer in spirit

that no longer laughs but mourns
with its expressionless black navel love's
deceit. . . .

Those lines in Book One of *Paterson* were part of an effort to save many of us from arid pedantry: "A reply to Greek and Latin with the bare hands." Again and again abstractions are denounced, particulars stressed as redemptive, the famous "no ideas, but in things." At times one imagines Williams quite drunk (by and large he drank very little, except when his wife and children were in Europe for a year, 1927-1928) and flailing at lots of hanging straw men. But at other times he is soberly acute in his judgment of the real world—the "clerks" he mentions in *Paterson* who have "got out of hand forgetting for the most part/ to whom they are beholden." He characterizes intellectuals as

spitted on fixed concepts like
roasting hogs, sputtering,
their drips sizzling
in the fire.

But his was not a self-serving combativeness—an embittered expression of rivalrous envy. An agnostic, really, he echoed Kierkegaard's pre-Freudian but utterly contemporary psychological self-penetration, as in

Who are these people
how complex
the mathematic
among whom I see myself
in the regularly ordered plateglass of
his thoughts, glimmering before shoes
and bicycles?

Such a devastating evocation of the calculating nature of literary narcissism was meant to be confessional in nature. Williams's powerful assault on his own egotism, on his greedy ambitiousness, was the stuff of a long life, as Mariani is determined to show. This is a biography of days and weeks and months and years carefully recited, but not in a way

the writing doc would have minded, I suspect. I remember him in his old age, badly hurt by strokes and heart attacks and abdominal diseases, yet a fighter whose daily restlessness of spirit was still with him: the eye muscles, the voice muscles as well as those of his weakened but not resigned legs and arms. His activity was never random. The mind, he seemed to feel, is always prey to those ready to seize it, paralyze it with toxins—the pieties so many of us

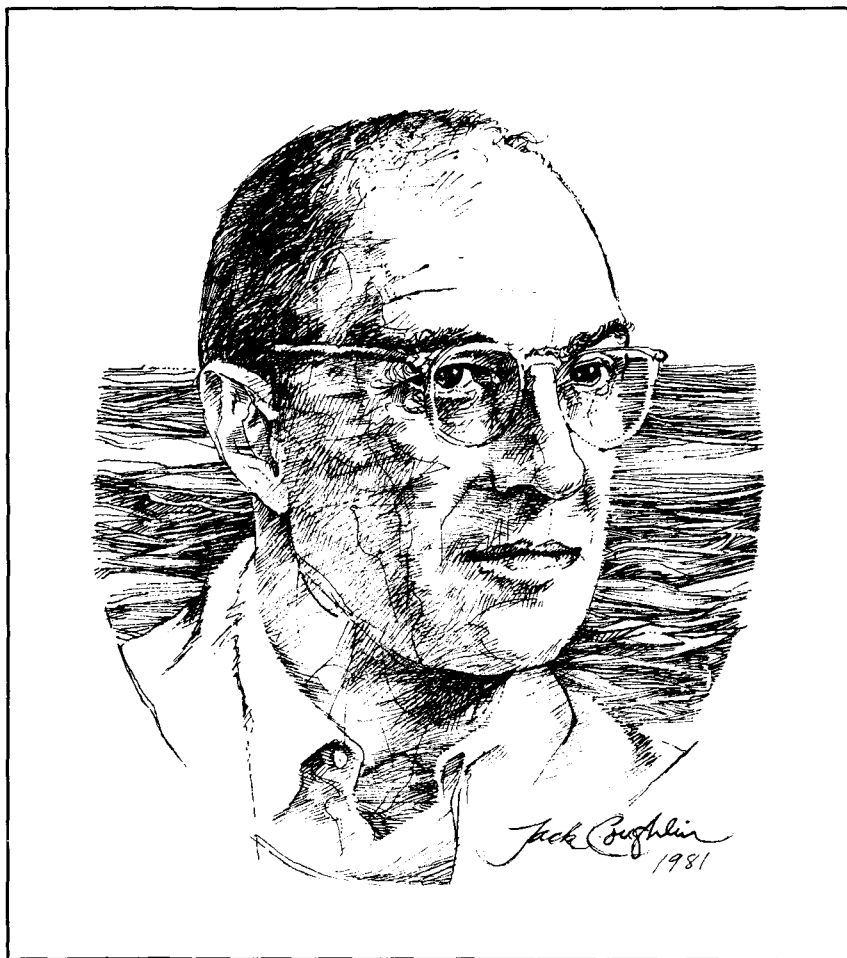
order to hear T. S. Eliot read his poems and lecture is extremely touching. Eliot was a great poet, Williams knew in his heart; but he loathed his departure for England, his assumption of an aristocratic, highly mannered life. With the words "a local pride" he launched his answer to the Anglophiliac posture which he believed was something much larger than one great poet's idiosyncratic preferences. His outbursts against Eliot, one dares presume, were really

directed at his own nation's university life; they could be construed in fact as a sign of deep respect toward, if unacknowledged awe of, the poet himself. And he stood by his old friend Pound, despite the latter's exiled aestheticism, not to mention his crazy political life; he stood by him as a great poet while denouncing all the while the obscene junk that the world heard, for instance, in the wartime radio broadcasts from Rome.

Also valuable in this biography is the appreciation of Williams the physician—not an alternative life a poet sought in order to make a living. In a chapter ("The Practice") of his autobiography, Williams eloquently described the spiritual nourish-

ment that his profession offered him. To be sure, he was always an overworked, underpaid doctor, and a writer on the run who worked at the end of a long day, or in rare moments of leisure. But one wonders whether some of the astonishing energy that nature gave him didn't have to be taken away, each day, before he could write at any great length. His mind saw almost too much. Medicine tamed him, gave him a discipline—which, in turn, helped him with those words, those images.

He was an intensely private man, for all his ebullience and responsiveness to people, places, things. There is a sexy



DRAWING OF WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS BY JACK COUGHLIN FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

get weary of questioning, let alone fighting. Mariani recognizes that Williams's life was itself one of those "things" he kept addressing. The insatiable curiosity of a Boswell is redeemed from pettiness or idolatry by the figure being pursued. Williams emerges heroic, able to stand tall and significant in a world he carefully circumscribed, with daily medical rounds, regular stints at a typewriter in his Rutherford Victorian home.

Mariani wisely reminds us that the tough warrior also knew when to seek peace. The story of Bill and Flossie Williams taking the train to Washington in

loneliness to much of his poetry, and his short stories, as in the art of John Sloan or Edward Hopper. Mariani's reading of the autobiographical story "Old Doc Rivers" is just right—as a portrait of the mind's power to isolate even a naturally gregarious person. Williams's doctor stories (published as *Life Along the Passaic River*) reveal him caught up in a redemptive magic of sorts: the wounded, solitary seeker given a chance by the patient to be healed, to come out of himself, by attending someone with devotion—with an utter concentration Dr. Williams has described as befalling him by a nod of Grace.

This is a definitive biography in certain respects. It contains all the details, and then some—high school report cards, for example, and medical school grades. Time haunted the busy doctor, the versatile writer, and time dominates this book, which is narrated with a strong chronological (rather than interpretive) emphasis, though Mariani does allow himself an occasional critical digression. His writing is energetic, fast-paced, a bit tough—not unlike the manner of the busy New Jersey writer and physician himself. This is a long book, and some will judge that parts of it ought to have been cut. But William Carlos Williams was *sui generis*, a citizen well worth inclusion in his own magnificent social history (good God, he did that brilliantly, too!) *In the American Grain*; and it is a pleasure to have so much of his exceptional life run by one's eyes, reach one's mind and heart again.

ROBERT COLES

BRIEF REVIEW

Voices in the Garden by Dirk Bogarde

(Knopf, 352 pp., \$12.95)

Nearly everyone remembers what Samuel Johnson said about a woman preaching: it's like a dog walking on his hind legs. It's not done well but you're surprised to find it done at all. The same might hold true for an actor writing, but in the case of Dirk Bogarde, he writes so very well that you'd almost be tempted to wonder about his acting—

until you think back to such films as *The Servant* and *The Damned* and remember how commanding a dramatic figure he is.

Voices in the Garden is Bogarde's fourth book. The first two were autobiographical and this is the second novel. Set in the south of France, where Bogarde lives, it has at its center the luxurious Villa Triton, home of Sir Charles and Lady Peverill. There, as in a Shakespearean magic wood, events are somehow not of this world. Time is suspended and old identities take on new meanings. But it's not because Sir Charles or his wife, known as Cuckoo, are themselves particularly magical. Cuckoo herself, in fact, is mortally ill and weary of her life's familiar diversions; the only intimacy left between her and Sir Charles is knowledge of each other's foibles.

No, the reason for the allure and the power of the Villa Triton is the passing values it represents: assured wealth, easy elegance, well-trained servants, the kind of hospitality where a simple supper for an unexpected guest is four courses with two wines. To this household comes an unexpected guest: Marcus Pollock, a young Englishman who, having never hobbled with the aristocracy, had no idea how much he would enjoy it. Marcus isn't really a working-class hero, but still his girlfriend, a German girl who calls herself Leni Minx, is afraid to tell him that she too is aristocratic, a countess in rebellion.

Marcus and Leni had been planning a holiday of camping on the beach. Then Marcus rescues Cuckoo from drowning and realizes that she'd been trying to kill herself; immediately thereafter, he lets himself be talked into staying at the Villa Triton and keeping silent about what he knows. The failed suicide is a special secret to be shared by him and Lady Peverill, whose interest in life is revived by Marcus's presence. There are, after all, a lot of secrets in and around the Villa Triton, some of them relatively innocent and some slimy, but Dirk Bogarde takes for granted the sophistication of his readers.

Voices in the Garden is a very grown-up book, but it is in no way affected by popular notions of what an adult novel should be like, or at least here sex and violence, and painful relationships, and intimations of mortality are layered in with consummate subtlety. Not only does Bogarde assume his readers to be

worldly, he also assumes them to be intelligent—so they don't need to be punched about the head to figure out what's going on. And Bogarde is just as capable of presenting love and loyalty as he is of exposing the rotten underside of one segment of the international film colony.

Is there life after the Riviera? Well, Dirk Bogarde knows that there is both good and evil under the sun, and in this wonderfully readable, absolutely civilized novel he lets us listen, knowing they'll reveal themselves, to the voices in the garden.

MICHELE SLUNG

Michele Slung reviews fiction for National Public Radio's "Morning Edition."

MYSTERIES

The blockbuster phenomenon has long since overtaken the mystery and spy thriller field and there is nothing to be done about it. A casual survey of the reading matter as I walked down the aisle of a recent Amtrak train from New York to Washington revealed nine people in a single car reading Robert Ludlum and three with Lawrence Sanders; who knows what lurked behind some of the other good, gray covers? Halfway around the world Americans carry their reading loyalties with them: a ship's library as one cruised the Sunda and Sulu seas turned up two Christies, two Sanders, one James McClure, and six Ludlums, including three copies of the same title.

Protesting will do no good, of course. Ludlum does make for compelling reading, if one is not paying close attention. *The Matarese Circle* (Bantam, \$3.50) is no less silly than the earlier Ludlums but it is better written. To be sure, the little annoying slips are still there: the hero thinks to escape "to Melanesia, the Fijis, . . . any of a dozen Sunda islands" (if you don't spot the problem here forget it), and the exact nature of the terror that awaits is remarkably vague: the Matarese council, a body of incredibly well-placed descendants of a Sardinian bent on revenge and world-dominance, "sends in the experts, and provides covert financing. Fanatics do not

labor over the source of funds, only their availability." We never really learn more about how one of Ludlum's international conspiracies works, since someone can be counted upon to hurl a bomb at our hero before anyone can get down to details. *The Bourne Identity* (Bantam, \$3.75), the current best-seller (equally long: Ludlums generally run to a dependable 500-plus pages), requires the reader to believe that a top-flight killer has so lost his memory he cannot recall whether he works for Us or Them, and none of the many attempts to kill him by both sides helps much. He is succored by a Canadian whom he first kidnaps from a conference in Geneva; despite rough treatment, she naturally falls in love with the mysterious Bourne. Yet Ludlum seems not to have bothered to swat up on Canada, since Europe is his setting, and so he has the lovely Marie St. Jacques appealing to Versailles and other French symbols long abandoned by any French Canadian. He gets the functions of the Treasury Board in Ottawa wrong, and he insists, redundantly, that our heroine is a French-Canadienne.

The slower, more stolid, more genuine books are relegated to a few review lines on a back page. Leo Bruce is one such: Academy Chicago Ltd. is reissuing the Sergeant Beef mysteries in cloth and paper, with one of them—*Case for Three Detectives* (1936)—published in the United States for the first time. All are worth reading: *Case with Ropes & Rings*, *Neck and Neck*, *Case for Sergeant Beef* (probably the best known), and *Cold Blood* (\$9.95, \$4.50 paper) and Rupert Croft-Cooke, who was Bruce, permits nary an error nor an illogical sequence. Yet Sergeant Beef doesn't stand a chance in the sweepstakes.

In even stronger contrast to the blockbuster writers is Ted Allbeury, an Englishman who has been developing steadily for years. His latest, *The Other Side of Silence* (Scribner's, \$11.95), is logical, brutal, exceedingly careful, and very sad; it measures up to his *A Choice of Enemies* (1973) which until now Allbeury hasn't matched. *The Other Side of Silence* is about how Kim Philby decided that he wants to return to London—or seems to—and how a British agent is drawn into a touching, tense situation. Allbeury's ironic tone will fill the void left by the death of Francis Clifford.

Its not clear which void Loren D. Estleman would like to fill, though with his new exploration of the underside of

Detroit, *Angel Eyes* (Houghton Mifflin, \$11.95), he ought to make most readers temporarily forget their yearning for another Hammett or Chandler. Detroit's Renaissance Center rises over the action in satiric comment on the grimy action below: a nightclub dancer disappears, the head of the United Steel-haulers Union is dragged down, and the denouement is straight out of *Red Harvest*. Estleman handles the English language with real imagination, perhaps second only to Joseph Hansen by now, so that one keeps reading for the sheer joy of seeing the phrases fall into place.

At the other end of the spectrum from the ornate jazz notes of Estleman is P.G. Wodehouse, whose use of the English language is so pure only those who actually know how to read can ever expect to find him amusing. D.R. Benson has had the happy thought to draw together a dozen "tales of fiendish cunning" in *Wodehouse on Crime* (Ticknor & Fields, \$12.95), and while Bensen's introduction is exceedingly thin, and a foreword by Isaac Asimov appears to be an example of automatic writing, one cannot fail to compare the straight lines of a master of English prose with the Baroque constructions, adorned with repetitive italics, of Robert Ludlum.

ROBIN W. WINKS

TRB, from page 2

As for what the Administration has dubbed its "Watergate overreaction package," there does seem to be a consensus on one point: the special prosecutor law isn't working. That was the one that led to a damaging and costly investigation of Hamilton Jordan's cocaine use on an allegation made by a blatantly vindictive tax cheat. Jordan never fully recovered his usefulness to Jimmy Carter.

The Administration's plans, however, go well beyond that narrow provision. In the interests of national security, a host of accountability laws are being revised, through either executive order or proposed legislation. The Justice Department wants to limit sharply the reach of the Freedom of Information Act and to broaden the classification of government papers. No less a protector of official secrets than Richard Nixon had drafted the presumption that gov-

ernment documents should be available to the public unless demonstrable needs of national security demand otherwise. The Reagan order does away with that presumption.

The Administration's FOIA legislation was presented to Congress last month. Assistant Attorney General Jonathan Rose called the act "a highly overrated instrument" and said that its 1974 amendments were "adopted in an extraordinary atmosphere" that might now be "more balanced." Among the new restrictions are law enforcement and business and intelligence records. Moreover, the Justice Department has said it would prefer to defend the government against FOIA suits than give in.

Then there is the proposed executive order for the CIA, which would permit the agency for the first time to penetrate purely domestic organizations for any purpose that the director believes legal, even to the point of "influencing the activity of the organization or its members." That sort of leeway alarmed the likes of Senate Intelligence Committee chairman Barry Goldwater, who said his panel had agreed that the Administration's action was ill-advised.

Big U.S. corporations are also worried about the proposed order, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. The *Journal* reported that the CIA "might decide to place an agent to sabotage business deals that the government decided weren't in the nation's best interest." So much for blind patriotism. Undoubtedly more pleasing to big business is the Administration-supported bill passed recently by the Senate Banking Committee, which would significantly weaken the 1977 law prohibiting U.S. companies from bribing foreign officials to win contracts. The law was enacted after the Security and Exchange Commission found large-scale bribes being tendered through the secret slush funds of more than 400 American corporations. The new measure, the Administration believes, will encourage exports.

So there it is—the third arena. Whatever else might be said about ringmaster Ronald Reagan, there is an ideological consistency to his attitude on government responsibilities. Looking after the rights of minorities and limiting official or corporate abuses are time-consuming, sometimes expensive, and imperfect. Until recently, the country did these things anyway. Now it's shrugging them off.

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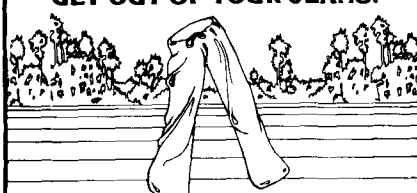
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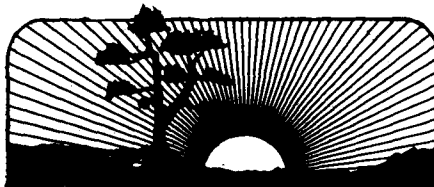
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LONDON DIARIST

Elegiac Community

EXCEPT FOR THE happy news from that nice couple, the Waleses, it has been, typically, a bad few weeks for the British. With the pound bobbling at about \$1.85—down 13 percent during the last six months—the government cut some of its losses by disencumbering itself of the colony of Belize. Its representative on this occasion was the young Prince Michael of Kent, who, with his scraggly hippie's beard and Franz Josef uniform, bore an embarrassing resemblance to the Beatles' Sergeant Pepper. Such is the local uncertainty about what style Britain should now assume. Whatever it turns out to be, it's sure to be a style more conspicuous for disappointment than for exultation. It has just been revealed that during the Royal Wedding month of July, tourist revenue fell 17 percent below July a year ago. The vainglorious Concorde continues to impoverish the country, and British Airways loses about as much money as a national airline can. North Sea oil, a few years ago supposed to be a trigger of unprecedented well-being, has proved "disappointing." That's a word you hear around London as frequently as you hear "Have a nice day" in Houston. Rupert Murdoch's London *Times*, also a great money-loser, has just been through one of its periodic labor stoppages, and Murdoch has again threatened to close it down unless the boys in the composing room cooperate. No one seems to have considered saving it by making it better. It is abysmally written and edited. Those who produce unclumsy prose write increasingly for the leftist *Guardian* or even the stuffy *Daily Telegraph*. The reputation of the *Times* is a relic of the old days. Today the best edited London daily is the *Telegraph*, although it's discreditable to say so because of its right-wing politics. Its pretense that nothing has changed since 1914 endears it to the enemy—rural clerics, reactionary schoolmasters dreaming of the birch, and the lesser toads of the Thatcher administration. Still, viewed professionally, it is the best newspaper in England.

I HAD FORGOTTEN how small everything is here. The supermarket aisles are half the size human movement demands, and shoppers clutching minimal quantities of groceries collide constantly for all their apologetic sidling. Britain is the venue of the mini-fridge where you

store your mini-provisions until you cook them on a mini-stove. The very typing paper is doll-size, and books achieve a very small sale. Minimalism here is not just a term deployed by art critics: it's a concept defining the national style. Minimal expectations are the rule, from table-waiting and service in shops to writing, and are satisfied by minimal performance. Novelists assemble tiny social and comic fictions, and the most respected poets are miniaturists like Philip Larkin and John Betjeman. Increasingly, Queen Mary's dollhouse seems less a freak offshoot of royal fatuity than a significant national emblem.

THE GREAT LOCAL event of autumn has been the start of the 11-part Thames television dramatization of Evelyn Waugh's overripe *Brideshead Revisited*. He wrote that novel during the war when nobody had enough to eat, and he recognized later that in the matter of fine wines, rich sauces, and grand interiors he'd gone too far. The series is broadcast on Tuesday nights, and then people stick as close to their living rooms as they used to in the States for *Upstairs, Downstairs*. It's not quite true that on Tuesday nights "the streets are deserted," but if you give a dinner party then you'd better realize from the start that it will come apart at telly time. The papers have given this event immense space, more than to the absurd Cancún conference and almost more than to the current strike at the British Leyland automotive works, which has made the British even more vulnerable than before to Japanese competition. In pubs of all classes you hear fine points being debated on Wednesdays: Is Sebastian effeminate enough? Did Olivier play better than Gielgud, or Gielgud than Olivier? (Both are wonderful, actually.) But everyone agrees that visually the production is gorgeous—superb sentimental color views of Oxford and Venice, for a start—and it seems clear that its very excess, its luscious images of privilege and charm and wit, is what's endearing it to an audience worried about fuel bills and the constantly rising cost of fish fingers. Indeed, except for the absence of nearby explosions, London at the moment is not unlike London during the war, when oranges were only a memory ("Do try some of my carrot marmalade") and children

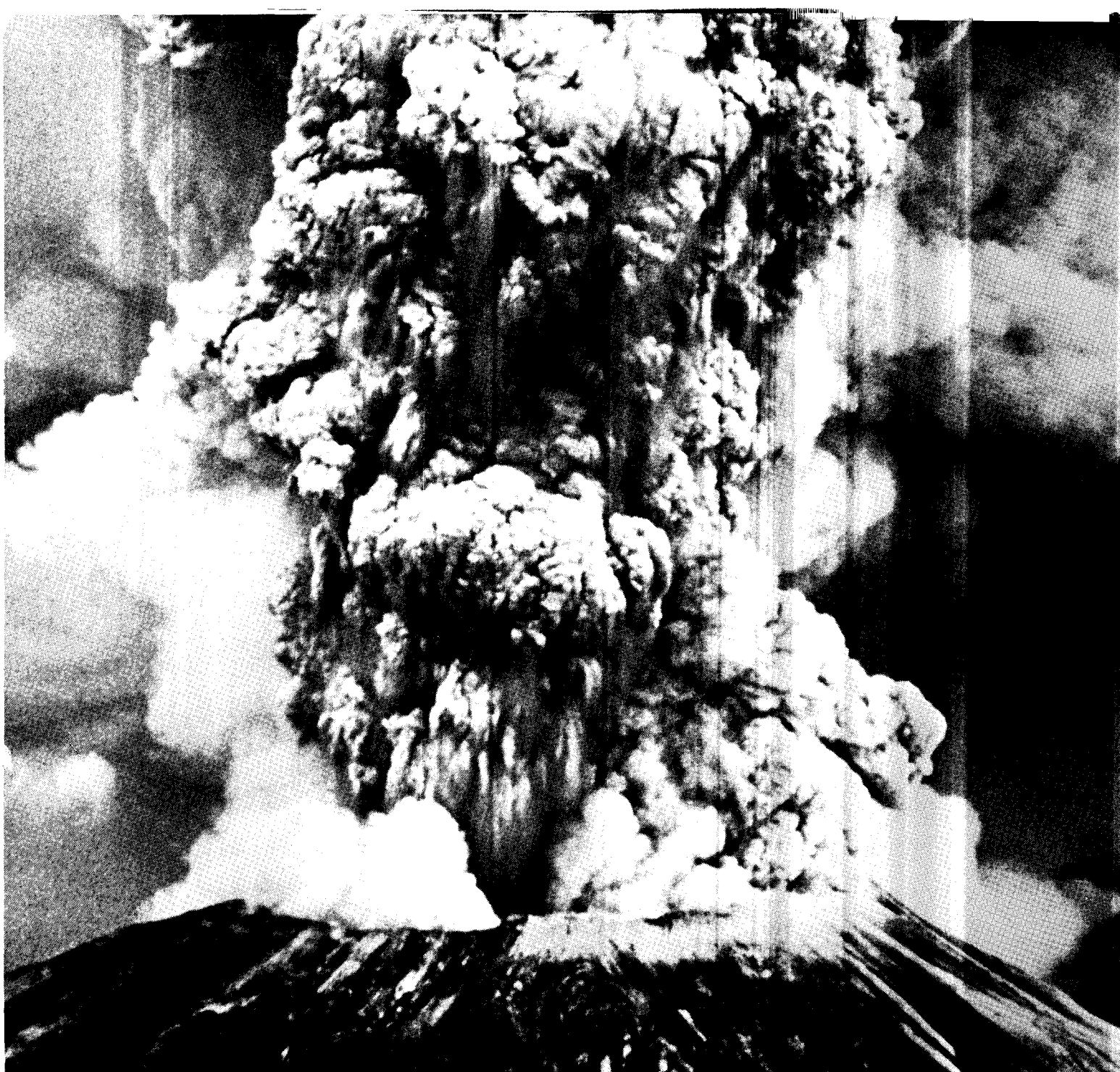
ten years old had never seen a banana. Economic fact has turned this into a straitened society, and if the armies of the unemployed have little reason to hope that the future will be rosier, there's always the color and swash available on Tuesday nights. The current popularity of the series seems to unite this moment with the one during the war when Waugh, sick to death of restrictions and deprivations, committed his original overfruity compensatory gesture.

WITH A "DISAPPOINTING" present, and a better future not quite conceivable, the British seem increasingly to take refuge in elegiac gestures like this. Since World War II and Suez, they have established the kind of society that deserves to be called an elegiac community. "The past is always with her, and the people looking back," as Henry van Dyke wrote some years ago, comparing Europe unfavorably with America. His words are eminently true of Britain at the moment, and I'm not sure that, as the future unwinds itself, we're not going to have to learn the elegiac style ourselves. Recently there occurred a perfect British elegiac exercise. A great overgrown hole in an out-of-the-way spot in Kent proved to contain some bones, the wreckage of a Hurricane fighter, and the wristwatch of Pilot Officer Colin Francis, aged 19, when he was shot down in August 1940. Last week the Royal Air Force gave him a full funeral with Union Jack-draped coffin, rifle salute, and "The Last Post," and it was broadcast by the BBC so that all could be there. "He was a grand kid," his former group captain recalled. (It makes one suspect that All Souls' Day is never going to catch on in the States.) As I write this I've just read the *Telegraph*, and in the Personals I've come upon the kind of thing that defines the elegiac community. One example among many each day, which you'd never encounter in the *New York Times*:

BARKER.—Always remembering and especially on his birthday today, my lovely young son David Conquest, Pilot Officer RAF, killed in battle over Germany on Empire Day, 1940.

The whole situation of Britain calls out for an elegist like the Hardy of *The Dynasts*. But all it gets is Betjeman and Larkin.

P.F.



The price of corn just went sky-high.

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